An Unusual Presentation of Lung Cancer: Case Report

Akciğer Kanserinde Değişik Bir Prezentasyon

ABSTRACT Intramedullary spinal cord metastasis (ISCM) is a rare form of central nervous system metastasis of systemic malignant tumors. A 73-year-old male patient was admitted to our outpatient clinic with dyspnea, cough and left arm and foot pain. His thorax CT demonstrated an irregular bordered solitary mass lesion of 4 cm diameter. Cervicothoracal magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) was performed for the evaluation of spinal cord due to clinical findings such as left arm and foot fatigue and urinary incontinence. Cervical spinal cord was found expanded from first cervical to first thoracic segment and there was diffuse increased signal intensity in T2 weighted images. In this case report, servico-thoracal localization of intramedullary spinal cord metastasis in a lung cancer patient is presented and radiological differential diagnosis is discussed.

Key Words: Lung neoplasms, spinal cord, neoplasm metastasis

ÖZET Intrameduller spinal kanal metastazı (ISKM), sistemik malign tümörlerin nadir bir santral sinir sistemi metastazıdır. 73 yaşında erkek hasta polikliniğimize dışıp, öksürük ve sol kol ve bacak ağrısı ile başvurdu. Toraksı CT sinde 4 cm çapında düzenli smirli soliter bir lezyon mevcuttu. Üriner inkontinans, sol kol ve bacakta güçsüzlik gibi klinik bulgular nedeniyle spinal kanalin değerlendirilmesi için servikotorakal manyetik rezonans inceleme (MRI) yapıldı. Servikal spinal kanalin birinci servikal segmentten birinci torakal segmente kadar genişlediği ve T2 ağırlıklı imajlarda difüz artık sinyal yoğunluğunu saptandı. Bu olgu sunumunda, serviko-torakal yerleşimli intrameduller spinal kanal metastazı yapmış bir akciğer kanseri olgusunun ve radyolojik ayırıcı tanı tartışılmasını.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Akciğer kanseri, spinal kanal, metastaz

Türkiye Klinikleri Arch Lung 2009;10(1):35-8

Intramedullary spinal cord metastasis (ISCM) is a rare form of central nervous system metastasis of systemic malignant tumors. Lung cancer and breast cancer are the most frequent primary sites of intramedullary metastasis, however there are very few cases in this group and sporadic case reports and small series have been reported.1,2

In this case report, cervico-thoracal localization of intramedullary spinal cord metastasis is presented and epidemiology, pathogenesis and diagnostic approach is reviewed in the view of the literature.
CASE REPORT

A 73-year-old male patient was admitted to our outpatient clinic with dyspnea, cough and left arm and foot pain ongoing for 20 days. On physical examination he was asthenic, and there were crackles in the left lung. His neurological examination revealed paresthesia on the left arm and foot. Thorax CT demonstrated an irregular bordered solitary mass lesion of 4 cm diameter and postobstructive parenchymal changes in the left lung inferior lobe superior segment (Figure 1). In the fiberoptic bronchoscopy we observed the left lung inferior lobe narrowed and histopathological evaluation of the bronchial lavage was non-diagnostic. Transthoracic needle aspiration biopsy results were compatible with non small cell lung cancer. Cervicothoracal magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) was performed for the evaluation of spinal cord due to clinical findings such as left arm and foot fatigue and urinary incontinence. In T1 weighted (W) images a heterogenic isointense and in T2W images a central hypointense mass lesion of 1, 5 cm with a hyperintense rim was observed in the cervical MRI. Cervical spinal cord was found expanded from segment C1 to T1 and there were diffuse increased signal intensity T2 W images. (Figure 2). After IV Gadolinium (Gd) administration, the mass lesion revealed increased heterogenic signal intensity (Figure 3). These findings were accepted as intramedullary spinal metastasis and diffuse spinal cord oedema. The patient was diagnosed as stage 4 non small cell lung cancer and chemotherapy and radiotherapy were planned.

DISCUSSION

Intramedullary spinal cord metastasis has been reported very rarely except in the course of central nervous system tumors.1,2 Accurate incidence is not known as cord metastases originating from other tumors are usually diagnosed postmortem. Cord metastases originating from other tumors are un-
common and most of them (50%) originate from pulmonary malignancies. The incidence of cord metastases due to lung cancer is 3% within all other neoplasms and cord metastases are more frequent in small cell lung cancer with respect to non small cell lung cancer. Nonneurogenic spinal cord metastases have been reported usually in the dorsal region, however a predilection of a special region for lung cancer has not been described.

Nonneurogenic spinal cord metastases are usually associated with brain metastases and they are observed multiple in the spinal cord level. This is one of the signs of the haematogenous dissemination of the cord metastases of nonneurogenic malignancies. Haematogenous dissemination is the most frequent way of dissemination; other ways include dissemination by deep venous plexus, perineural lymphatics, and invasion from adjacent bones to durameter by cerebrospinal fluid and arterial embolization. In our patient we did not determine brain metastases and also metastatic lesion was solitary, so we excluded haematogenous dissemination. We thought the metastatic lesion developed as a result of the anastomoses between venous systems due to increased intrathoracic pressure by a mass lesion and associated infectious processes.

Diagnoses depending on neurological symptoms have been defined in one third of the patients. Epidural type metastases may also present with similar symptomatology, however they usually present with symmetrical involvement and differential diagnosis can not be done without radiological examinations.

Spinal cord metastases can be diagnosed by neurological signs, CSF evaluation and MRI findings. The best investigation for spinal cord metastatic tumors is MRI. Typical ISCM is a small isolated oval shaped lesion. They are observed isointense in T1W images and hyperintense in T2W images. The part of the lesion showing signal enhancement with Gd administration represents high intensity in T2 due to diffuse oedematous changes adjacent to the mass lesion. In our case, we observed a fairly long segment of spinal cord expanded in T2 sequences due to a contrast enhanced mass as well as diffuse oedema. However, it should be considered that a paraneoplastic neuropathy or a coincidental demyelinating, inflammatory, vascular myelopathy and transverse myelitis may be observed in MRI of a lung cancer patient in neurological evaluation. The differential diagnosis from transverse myelitis in our case was performed by the MR findings demonstrating a contrast enhanced mass lesion over an expanded spinal cord associated with increased signal intensity in T2 sequences due to oedema. The differentiation from primary intramedullary tumors was done by the rapid onset of the symptoms (these group diseases initiate insidiously and symptoms progress slowly) and oedema in fairly long segment of the spinal cord, bigger than the mass lesion.

In conclusion, in the presence of neurological symptoms, spinal cord metastases are uncommon but possible complications in lung cancer patients. The diagnosis can be done by MRI findings including long segmental involvement both resulting from the mass lesion and diffuse oedema.

REFERENCES


