GIANT CELL TUMOUR OF LOWER END OF TIBIA
CASE REPORT

Topic: giant cell tumour of lower end of tibia

Abstract

Introduction: Giant cell tumour is a locally aggressive tumour accounts for 5% of primary bone tumours. Most common age group affected is 20 to 55 years. It is more common among females. Most common sites are distal end of radius and proximal tibia.

Case Report: A 22-year-old male presented with complaints of pain of the right ankle joint for 2 months. There was no history of trauma. On examination, tenderness on the anterolateral aspect of the right ankle joint. No visible swelling was found and there was no restriction of movements. X-rays revealed a well-defined, expansile, predominantly lytic lesion in the distal epi-metaphyseal region of the right tibia. Magnetic resonance imaging revealed an ill-defined expansile lesion involving epi-metaphyseal end of the lower end of tibia causing cortical destruction with possibility of GCT. Surgery by excision, curettage and bone grafting was performed to fill the defect. Histopathological examination of the tissue showed multinucleated giant cells with a uniform vesicular nucleus and mononuclear cells which were spindle shaped with uniform vesicular nucleus suggestive of GCT.

Conclusion: We did 7 months of out-patient follow-up. Patient had full range of motion of the ankle joint during follow up period with no signs of recurrence.

Keywords: Giant cell tumour, distal tibia

Introduction

GCT represents approximately 5% of all primary bone tumours (1,2). Cooper in 1818 first described giant cell tumours (GCT) of the bone (1). More than half of these lesions occur in the third and fourth decades of life [3].

GCTs are benign tumours with potential for aggressive behaviour and capacity to metastasize. Although it is a benign tumour of bone, it has got a high recurrence rate. Recurrence rate of giant cell tumour of long bones after meticulous curettage and bone grafting is around 10% to 20% (4). 90% of GCT exhibits the typical epiphyseal location (5,6).

The common clinical symptoms are pain related to the affected bone, swelling and decreased range of movement of adjacent joint (7). The most common locations in decreasing order are the distal femur, the proximal tibia, the distal radius and the sacrum (8).

Diagnosis of giant cell tumour of bones depends mainly on clinical and radiological examination (2). Treatment of GCT is directed towards local control without sacrificing joint function. This can be achieved by intralesional curettage with autograft

reconstruction. The cavity of the excised tumour is filled with morselised iliac corticocancellous bone or using bone cement as packaging material for the defect (7).

The distal epiphysis of the tibia is an unusual location for a primary bone GCT which occurs in only 0.15–2.8% of all primary GCTs (11). We present a case to highlight the rare location of GCT in the distal tibia which was treated successfully with curettage and bone grafting with 7 months follow up.

Case report

A 22-year-old male presented to us in May 2020 with complaints of pain over the anterolateral aspect of right ankle joint for 2 months. The pain aggravated on walking. There was no history of trauma and was not associated with fever, loss of weight or any other constitutional symptoms. Personal and family history were non-contributory. Clinical examination (figure1) revealed no findings on inspection. Palpation revealed tenderness over the dorsolateral aspect of the distal tibia with no local rise of temperature. Range of motion of the right ankle joint was normal.

X-rays revealed a well-defined, expansile, predominantly lytic lesion in the distal epi-metaphyseal region of the right tibia with cortical breach and no periosteal reaction (Fig.2).

MRI of right ankle showed (figure 3) a well defined lesion in the epi-metaphyseal region of distal tibia approximately 27*35*38 mm size with narrow zone of transition. Cortical destruction was present with no evidence of periosteal reaction. No soft tissue component was noted.

According to the radiological classification of Campanacci, the tumour was classified as a grade 3 lesion (10).

Laboratory investigations were within normal limits. All preoperative work -up was done and an intralesional curettage and bone grafting was planned. Intraoperatively bone was exposed through an anterior approach to distal end of the tibia, a cortical window was made (Fig.4), the tumour was excised (Fig.5) and curettage was done. A thorough wash was given and the cavity was filled with bone graft (Fig.6).

The tumour was sent for histopathological examination which confirmed the diagnosis of GCT (Fig.7).

Postoperatively, patient was immobilised in a below knee cast for one month and converted to a PTB cast later. Sequential X-rays (Fig.8) were taken to confirm the union. Cast was removed after 3 months and regular physical therapy and weight bearing was also initiated. Patient was followed up at regular intervals and there is no evidence of recurrence at the end of 7 months.

Discussion

GCT of bone constitutes upto 20% of biopsy analysed benign bone tumours. It affects young adults between the ages of 20 and 40 years, several authors have reported a slight predominance of women over men. 90% of GCT exhibits the typical epiphyseal location. (5,6)

Pain is the leading symptom relating to the mechanical insufficiency resulting from the bone destruction. A soft tissue mass or bump can occasionally be seen as results from the

cortical destruction and tumour progression outside the bone. GCT is often found close to the joint thus limited range of motion is common, joint effusion and synovitis are also possible.

Bini et al. [10] published a article in which they treated giant cell tumour with curettage and cementation. It is postulated that the exothermic reaction of polymethyl methacrylate generates local hyperthermia which induces necrosis of any remaining neoplastic tissue.

Proximal tibia, distal femur and radius are typical sites. The distal epiphysis of the tibia is an unusual localization for a primary bone GCT which occurs in only 0.15–2.8% of all primary GCTs. In one study, 87 cases of GCT of bone were reviewed retrospectively, the tumour was located in the distal end of the tibia in only one patient (11). Su and Chen found 6 GCTs of the lower end of tibia in a group of 285 patients (12).

We treated the patient with curettage and bone grafting to pack the cavity which showed good postoperative results without any recurrences and functional problems.

Conclusion

Hence, we conclude that a patient of GCT of distal tibia was successfully treated with intralesional curettage and bone grafting with no signs of recurrence in 7 months follow up period.

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