POEMS Syndrome and Multiple Angioproliferative Lesions Mimicking Generalized Histiocytomas

RUBÉN DEL RÍO1, MERCÈ ALSINA1, JOSE MONTEAGUDO2, DANIEL TORREMORELL2, URBANO GONZÁLEZ1, JESÚS LUELMO1 and JOSÉ M. MASCARÓ1

1Department of Dermatology, Hospital Clinic, and Departments of 2Internal Medicine and 3Dermatology, Hospital Sabadell, Barcelona, Spain.

A case of POEMS syndrome and Castleman’s multicentric disease is reported. Multiple long-standing cutaneous lesions, histologically similar to histiocytomas, were the initial manifestation of POEMS syndrome. A high incidence of angiomatous lesions associated with POEMS syndrome has already been established. To our knowledge, this report is the first report to associate multiple angioproliferative lesions mimicking generalized histiocytomas with POEMS syndrome. Key words: Crow-Fukase syndrome; dermatofibroma.

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R. Del Río, Dep. Dermatology, Hospital Clinic, C/Casanova, 143, Barcelona, 08036, Spain.

POEMS syndrome is a multisystemic disorder involving polyneuropathy, organomegaly, endocrinopathy, plasmacytoma and haematopoietic disorders, and diverse cutaneous lesions (1). Initial cutaneous manifestations, although non-specific, help diagnose in the majority of cases. The most frequent signs are hyperpigmentation, oedema, hypertrichosis, sclerosis and skin haemangiomata (2, 3), the latter usually multiple, eruptive and tuberous angiomas. In the Japanese series, 24% to 44% of all patients with POEMS syndrome have angiomatous lesions (4). Although histological descriptions are seldom given, when pathological examinations are carried out, lesions have been commonly reported as mature capillary haemangiomas (5). Recently, Chan et al. (4) have described a peculiar histological form of angioma associated with POEMS syndrome which has been named glomeruloid hemangioma.

Castleman’s disease is a benign localized lymphoid hyperplasia. Multicentric presentation is usual, with diffuse lymphadenopathy, hepatosplenomegaly and haematological features, such as anaemia and hypergammaglobulinaemia. It has also been reported in association with POEMS syndrome (2, 6).

On the other hand, Smith & Wilson-Jones (7) described a benign vascular lesion, clinically resembling Kaposi’s sarcoma, and histologically similar to a dermatofibroma. These lesions were named multinucleated cell angiohistiocytomas (MCAH) and were not found to be related to any systemic disease (7, 8).

We report a patient with POEMS syndrome and Castleman’s multicentric disease, and multiple maculopapular lesions resembling histiocytomas.

Fig. 1. Multiple scattered dermatofibroma-like lesions on the patient’s trunk.

Fig. 2. Histological study of the first biopsy specimen. Moderate small vessel proliferation and diffuse infiltrate in the upper dermis (HE, 100x).
CASE REPORT

In 1988, a 42-year-old male with intermittent abdominal pain, long-lasting dysuria, and paresthesia of the arms was admitted to our hospital due to a new attack of abdominal pain. He complained of acute pain localized predominantly on his right hemiabdomen, vomiting and diarrhoea during the previous 3 days. Other symptoms were weight loss, asthenia, anorexia, impotence, coeuund, polydipsia and polyuria.

Physical examination showed a thin man, with hypertrichosis, a low hair line, sclerodermiform skin, and hypo-hyperpigmented macules on his lower extremities. Other signs were acropathy, bilateral Dupuytren, generalized hypotrophy, polyadenopathy, hepatomegaly with splenomegaly and global arreflexy.

Multiple (more than 50), individualized, consistent, maculopapular, brown-violaceous lesions were observed on the trunk and proximal part of the upper extremities. The patient stated that these lesions had appeared more than 20 years earlier as a generalized, asymptomatic eruption (Fig. 1).

Histological studies, performed on different occasions, of two lesions from the right arm revealed different histological patterns.

The first biopsy, taken in 1988, showed a moderate proliferation of small vessels in the upper and mid dermis, with moderate diffuse infiltrate of lymphocytic cells. Prominent connective interstitial tissue cells were present among the vessels. In the deeper areas, multinucleated cells with irregular and angular cytoplasm were detected. They had two or three nuclei and less cytoplasm than the foreign body giant cell type (Figs. 2 and 3).

An immunohistological study using the following markers was carried out: FVIIIHA, Ulex europeus (UEA-1), FXIIIa, Vimentine, Desmin, protein S-100, alpha-antitrypsin and leukocyte common antigen. The results are summarized in Table I. This biopsy was interpreted as histiocytoma.

The second biopsy, taken in 1991, showed a different histological pattern. Epithelial hyperplasia and marked proliferation of small capillary and venous vessels, in combination with angiectasis, were present in the upper and mid dermis. A diffuse lymphocytic infiltrate, mainly of perivascular location, was also seen. It was diagnosed as a capillary hemangioma in regression (Fig. 4).

DISCUSSION

Cutaneous angiomas are one of the main cutaneous signs associated with POEMS syndrome (2, 4, 5, 9, 10). They are usually multiple, eruptive and distributed superficially on the trunk and proximal areas of the extremities.

From a histological point of view, different forms of mature capillary hemangiomas have frequently been described, although a cavernous type (11), a glomeruloid pattern (4), immature cases (3) and erythroagocytosis phenomena (2) have also been observed. Furthermore, different types of angiomas may coexist in the same patient, suggesting that they may represent the same type of lesion in different stages of development or different degrees of endothelial proliferation resulting from contact with unknown angiogenic stimuli (9).

One of the biopsy samples from our patient was diagnosed as capillary hemangioma, characteristic of POEMS syndrome. The other biopsy sample was diagnosed as histiocytoma. Some histological and immunohistological findings were similar, although non-conclusively, to multinucleated cell angiohistiocytoma (MCAH) (Table I) (7). MCAH has been defined as an angiohistiocytic lesion with a histological pattern similar to that of histiocytoma.

Table I. The results of an immunohistological study of the first biopsy specimen.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specification</th>
<th>First biopsy</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FXIIIa</td>
<td>Fixed dendritic cells of connective tissue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interstitial cells negative multinucleated cells negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FVIIIHA</td>
<td>Vascular endothelia</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Capillaries positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vimentine</td>
<td>Connective tissue cells, capillaries, nerves, inflammatory cells positive, multinucleated cells positive, Capillaries positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UEA-1</td>
<td>Vascular and lymphatic endothelia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Capillaries positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alpha-1-CT</td>
<td>Macrophages and neutrophils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desmin</td>
<td>Muscular cells</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S-100</td>
<td>Nerves, Langerhans' cells, melanocytes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LCA</td>
<td>Leukocytes</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Lymphocytic cells</td>
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histiocytoma, with prominent vessels, diffuse histiocytic infiltration and multinucleated cells with a characteristic immunohistochemical pattern. MCAH has been reported as brown-violaceous papules, grouped on the limbs of a middle-aged female (7).

To our knowledge, generalized histiocytomas and MCAH have not yet been associated with any systemic process, to POEMS syndrome or Castleman’s disease, although both entities are frequently associated with cutaneous angiomas. It is possible, however, that the lesions could initially have been angiomas which slowly regressed, some resembling sclerotic hemangiomas with prominent vascularization, and some resembling histiocytomas, with some histological features of MCAH.

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REFERENCES