Malignant Pheochromocytoma and neurofibromatosis type 1

K. Osmani* (Dr), S. Azzoug (Pr), F. Chentli (Pr)
University of Medicine, Department of Endocrinology and Metabolic diseases, Bab El Oued teaching Hospital, Algiers, Algeria

Introduction: Patients with neurofibromatosis (NF) are at higher risk for tumors’ development. Pheochromocytomas are rare in NF type 1 (NF1), and malignant ones are even rarer. We aimed to report a malignant pheochromocytoma in a patient with NF1.

Case report: A 24-year-old female, whose father had colonic cancer, consulted in 2013 for abdominal pain and vomiting. Clinical examination pleaded for NF1 (multiple “café-au-lait” spots, and freckles). Blood pressure and the rest of clinical examination were normal. Echosonography discovered a right heterogeneous adrenal tumor measuring 6cm. Biological exploration showed normal urinary catecholamines (0.87 ng/ml n<1). Abdomen CT scan confirmed the solid and cystic tumor (Fig1). MIBG scintigraphy pleaded for right adrenal uptake. Work up for metastases was negative.

Fig1: CT scan showing the 6cm right adrenal tumor.

Treatment and follow up. After surgery, histological examination confirmed the pheochromocytoma with a Pass score of 4%. Post operative work up was negative.

9 months later, although both adrenals were free of tumors, urinary normetanephrines increased: 3750 nmol/24H (n=44-231), and diffuse bone (fig2) and medullary metastases with MIBG uptake were observed (Fig3).

Fig 2 showing metastases in iliac and sphenoid bones

Fig.3 MIBG scan showing diffuse uptake

Conclusion: The association of malignant pheochromocytoma with NF1, although very rare, should be known as a pheochromocytoma and its metastases may be silent as in the presented case.