Reviewer's report

Title: Long Term follow up (10 years) after En-Bloc Resection and Reconstruction of a Solitary Paraganglioma Metastasis in the first lumbar vertebral body. A Case Report

Version: 4 Date: 29 March 2010

Reviewer: Christian Koch

Comments to authors:

Major revision

This is an interesting case report concerning a rare tumor with a rare metastatic site. There are only very few reports in the literature and this report here has a unique longterm follow-up in addition to therapeutic approach, thereby is worthwhile being published in JMCR.

However, there are some issues concerning the English language and also minor other comments:

1. Abstract: "Paragangliomas" (plural)....They metastasize..." Say "Malignancy is defined by the occurrence of chromaffin tissue at sites where it is usually not present, for instance, bone, liver, and lung." Paragangliomas within ....medullaris. To the best of our knowledge, there are only ?3 (looks like there are more reports) reports (NOT descriptions) in the literature of metastatic spread of a retroperitoneal paraganglioma to a vertebral body."

The authors should avoid using similar or identical phrases from the literature, see Lehmen JA et al., Spine March 2010: Paraganglioma presenting as metastatic lesion in a cervical vertebra: a case report and review of the literature. (cite this paper) Also, cite:
Kwan RB et al., J Clin Neurosci 2010. Pre-operative embolisation of metastatic paraganglioma of the thoracic spine.

Abstract, case presentation: "We report on a 16-year old German ....resection of a 14 cm....vertebral body. After initial chemotherapy, marginal en-bloc...were performed followed by...."

What is "response" of the tumor cells ? The authors may wanna delete this sentence.
"...local recurrence or distant metastases (plural)."
2. Introduction: "..originates..."

It is incorrect to say "less than 10%" - see Whalen et al. 1992. Rather say "These metastasize infrequently." We now know that germline mutations in the SDHB gene represent a high risk factor for malignancy.

3. Case report:

"German..."....gynecologist..

Do the authors mean 24 h urinary catecholamines and metabolites ? fractionated metanephrines ?, serum/plasma AFP, NSE, betaHCG?

Explain what this means: "The tumor cells did not show any response to chemotherapy"

Carefully look through the paper "metastasis vs. plural metastases"

Discussion

It is incorrect to say that local recurrence = malignancy. Instead say " Therefore, malignancy can only be demonstrated by the presence of chromaffin tissue at sites where it is usually not present such as bone, lung, liver."

Say "This is unusual, because metastases have been reported to occur usually intradural when spine is involved." (see also above literature/reference) "To the best of our knowledge, there are only ?3 reports of metastatic spread of a retroperitoneal....

"....Both men died due to widespread metastatic disease."

Again, delete "did not show any response of the tumor" or explain what this means (no shrinkage, tumor mass unchanged, etc.). Also, in addition to refs. 20, 23-25, cite this reference:


How was the patient's blood pressure on follow-up ? Did the authors screen with 24 h urine for catecholamines including fractionated metanephrines ? Remember that this tumor type can change its biochemical profile during the course of disease even on longterm follow-up.

Conclusion

say "...following primary tumor resection, further surveillance screening (including 24 h urinary fractionated metanephrines and catecholamines) is recommended.

References

Ref. 10: "disease"
Ref. 19: "Rev Rheum Engl Ed" ??