Reviewer's report

Title: Atypical or typical ACTH-producing pulmonary carcinoids: report of two cases and the usefulness of 11C-5-hydroxytryptophan positron emission tomography

Version: 1 Date: 22 January 2013

Reviewer: Christian Koch

Which of the following best describes what type of case report this is?: Unexpected or unusual presentations of a disease

Has the case been reported coherently?: Yes

Is the case report authentic?: Yes

Is the case report ethical?: Yes

Is there any missing information that you think must be added before publication?: Yes

Is this case worth reporting?: Yes

Is the case report persuasive?: Yes

Does the case report have explanatory value?: Yes

Does the case report have diagnostic value?: Yes

Will the case report make a difference to clinical practice?: Yes

Is the anonymity of the patient protected?: Yes

Comments to authors:

The authors report a well written case series of 2 patients with ectopic ACTH syndrome which is rare.

There are some typographical and minor errors in Grammar in addition to omissions of certain laboratory and/or imaging and treatment modalities that should be mentioned/addressed.

Abstract:

first sentence: say "have" instead of has
specify ethnic group or race of woman and man reported here
add follow up time period before conclusion
Introduction:

add additional references mentioning pancreatic and ileal ectopic ACTH-secreting tumors -

Pancreatic neuroendocrine tumor with ectopic adrenocorticotropic production upon second recurrence.


Ectopic Cushing’s syndrome caused by a well differentiated ACTH-secreting neuroendocrine carcinoma of the ileum.


Is there a therapeutic role for octreotide in patients with ectopic Cushing’s syndrome?

Uwaifo GI, Koch CA, Hirshberg B, Chen CC, Hartzband P, Nieman LK, Pacak K.

Case 1:

specify ethnic group or race of the woman
was plasma chromogranin A and/or neuron specific enolase measured?

instead of "achieved" say received

what were the side effects of ketoconazole for this woman? what were the side effects of cabergoline and why was it added anyway, as it is known to be not very efficacious in patients with Cushing’s syndrome?

How would the authors define clinical improvement? Did glycemic control and/or blood pressure improve on ketoconazole and metyrapone? Usually the HPA axis overrides steroidogenesis blocker over time, i.e. ACTH and cortisol levels further rise. Why not here?

Say "investigations....are centralized...."

Figure 1 does not show color, as it would be typical for this type of PET tracer and imaging method" - please explain.

How much hydrocortisone is the patient now taking - do not say "tablet" but hydrocortisone. How many months of follow up does the patient now have after the tumor had been removed? Perhaps the patient was given too much HC thereby avoiding that the endogenous HPA axis recovers by its own.

Case 2:

specify ethnic group/race
report normal range for total testosterone in parentheses

did the patient have clinical features of osteoporosis or radiographic evidence for it?

how was the 1 mg (and/or 8 mg) dex supp test BEFORE surgery?

Was a pituitary MRI done? This should be stated here and why.

Discussion:

say "...have a better prognosis..."

Why would the authors state a normal pit MRI if here we deal with ectopic hypercortisolism and not Cushing's disease? suggest to delete this sentence.

say "for demonstrating an abnormal..."

Would modify the statement before the conclusion: "if....a useful imaging modality in addition to laboratory follow-up parameters could have been set".

The authors cannot ignore the fact that the resolution of SSR is around 6 mm, i.e. tumors smaller than that may not be picked up by imaging even if these tumors carried receptors for SSR2,35. The resolution for the mentioned specific PET tracer is around 4 mm to my knowledge and the authors should note these facts in a statement, ideally with respective literature cited.

Conclusion:

The authors should modify their sentence by noting that such imaging can only be performed at highly specialized endocrine tumor centers and that selected patients should be considered to be referred to such centers.

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests