Acinar Cell Carcinoma of the Pancreas Associated with Subcutaneous Panniculitis

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ABSTRACT

Context Acinar cell carcinoma is a rare pancreatic malignant tumor, which can be associated with a particular manifestation: pancreatic panniculitis. It presents with erythematous subcutaneous nodules located mainly on the legs. The skin lesions can precede, be concurrent, or follow the pancreatic illness. Pathogenesis is not fully understood, but it is believed to be associated with high levels of serum lipase produced by the neoplasm, causing fat necrosis in tissues. The treatment of pancreatic panniculitis is directed to the underlying pancreatic disease, which may result in regression of skin lesions. We report a case of pancreatic acinar cell carcinoma associated with subcutaneous panniculitis: a review of the English literature is also included. Case report A 79-year-old woman, with a 13-month history of acute pancreatitis, weakness, weight loss, and CT finding of a mass in pancreatic head, came to our attention complaining multiple, migratory and painful subcutaneous nodules at her lower extremities. High serum lipase levels were also present. She underwent pancreaticoduodenectomy, with subsequent regression of the skin lesions and normalization of serum lipase. Histology revealed an acinar-cell carcinoma of the pancreas. Liver metastases occurred six months after operation, and the patient underwent chemotherapy with gemcitabine. She is still alive 14 months after initial surgery. Conclusions Although rare, the association between acinar cell carcinoma and pancreatic panniculitis has been described in the literature. In a patient with subcutaneous nodules, the presence of acinar cell carcinoma should be considered in order to prevent long delay in the diagnosis and treatment of this pancreatic malignancy.