

Chordoma of the cervical spine - misjudged diagnosis

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Introduction: Primary tumors of the cervical spine are a rarity. Hemangiomas are often incidental findings on MRI; progression in size over time and fracture of the vertebral body are possible. Atypical hemangiomas can appear very inhomogeneous in terms of image morphology, so that the presence of a malignant tumor can be imitated.

Material/Method: We describe the case of a 67-year-old male patient, referred to us 11/2022 with movement-dependent cervicobrachialgia without sensorimotor deficits for a good two weeks. The patient had had a vertebral hemangioma HWK4 since 2012, which was last checked externally in 2018 by MR tomography and found to be stable.

Results: The X-ray/MR and CT diagnostics now performed showed a pronounced pathological destruction of the 4th cervical vertebra with lateral tumor expansion, enclose of the vertebral artery and long-stretched myelon compression. Due to the progression of vertebral destruction dorsal spondylodesis and histopathological sampling were carried out. The preliminary pathological findings raised the suspicion of an existing chordoma, so that aggressive ventral tumor debulking and vertebral column replacement using carbon-PEEK implants were carried out in second stage. Postoperatively, further oncological treatment was carried out using carbon ion radiotherapy.

Discussion: Chordomas are slow but destructive growing notochordal tumors with a very rare incidence. The localization on the cervical spine is a rarity, which is only described in the literature in a small number of cases. According to the available literature, there are no indications of the possible transformation of an unequivocally diagnosed hemangioma into a chordoma. The case presented and the literature research carried out show that the sole image morphological diagnosis of a benign mass requires appropriate follow-up controls. If there are changes in extent, a histopathological sampling is mandatory to detect the masking of another, malignant pathology.

Fig. 1

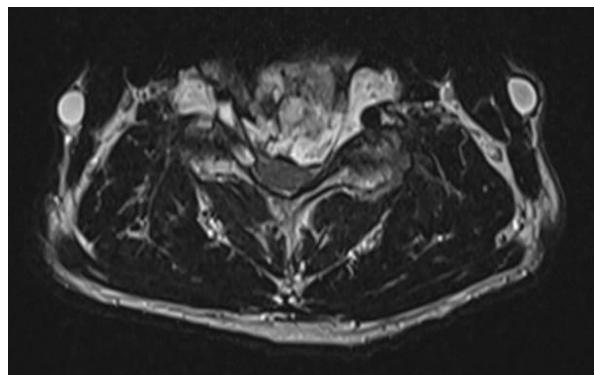


Fig. 2

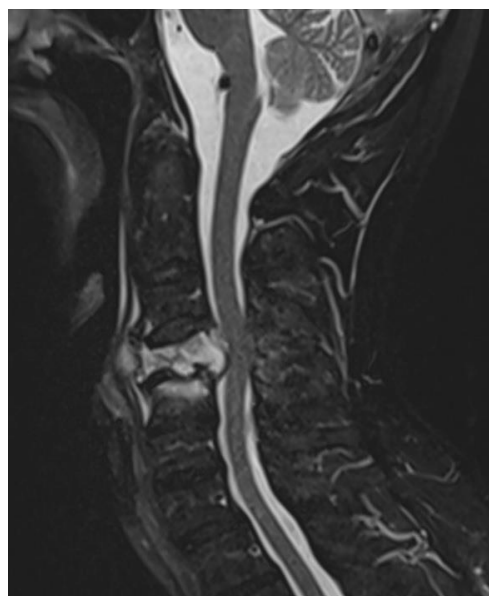


Fig. 3

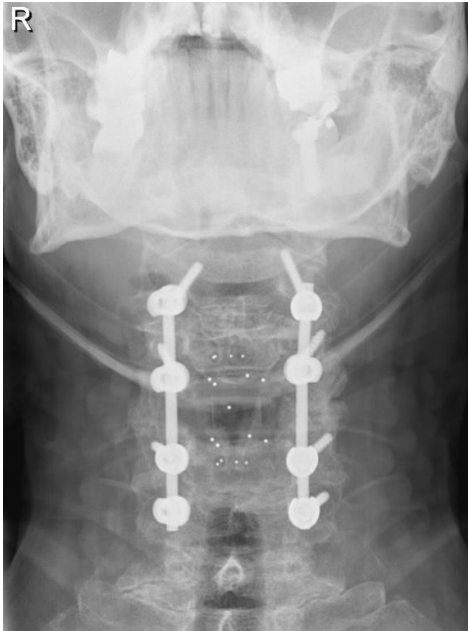


Fig. 4

