Heterotopic pancreas within a diverticulum in the small intestine

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BACKGROUND

Heterotopic pancreas is defined as the presence of pancreatic tissue outside the normal anatomical location, without any vascular or anatomical relation to the pancreas. Heterotopic pancreas remains mostly asymptomatic but may cause gastrointestinal bleeding, obstruction, pancreatitis or even malignant degeneration.

CASE REPORT

We report a single case of a 77 years old woman who underwent a thoraco-abdominal CT-scan to investigate for pulmonary embolism. Additional to the embolism a large mass (7cm in diameter) in the spleen has been detected and with the suspicion of a lymphoma the patient has been scheduled for a splenectomy. During explorative laparotomy and splenectomy, extended small intestinal diverticulosis and an additional mass of 4.5 x 4 x 2.2 cm of diameter in one of these diverticula, situated approximately 50cm distal to the ligament of Treitz, was discovered. An excision of the diverticula with the mass inside was performed by a small bowel resection. Histological evaluation showed the presence of ectopic pancreatic tissue within this small bowel diverticula with a moderate fibrosis of the excreting ducts but without any signs of malignant degeneration. The mass in the spleen turned out to be an inflammatory pseudotumor. Interestingly, the postoperative reviewed preoperative abdominal CT-scan (with oral, rectal and intravenous contrast) could not demonstrate the heterotopic pancreatic tissue in the diverticula of the small bowel.

CONCLUSION

The incidence of heterotopic pancreas is estimated between 0.5 – 13%. The most common locations are in the gastrointestinal tract and the stomach is the most frequent host. Heterotopic pancreas in the small intestine is a very rare entity especially when placed inside a jejunal diverticula and preoperative diagnosis is difficult due the absence of radiological signs. In evident cases a preventive excision is proposed in order to reduce the risk of potential complication as bleeding, intestinal occlusion and pancreatitis.

REFERENCES