Posttraumatic chronic and expanding thigh hematoma mimicking soft-tissue sarcoma – a diagnostic dilemma

M. Kauper*, M. Peter#, B. Egger#
*Department of Surgery, HFR Tafers, CH-1712 Tafers
#Department of Surgery, HFR-Fribourg – Cantonal Hospital, CH-1708 Fribourg

OBJECTIVES

Hematoma after trauma or surgery usually resolves without complications. In some instances, hematoma formation is followed by slow expansion of the mass.

The so called chronic expanding hematoma1 (CEH) is a relatively rare complication after soft tissue trauma which may mimic a malignant neoplasm.

METHODS

We present the case of a 74 years old morbidly obese woman with a slowly expanding post-traumatic soft-tissue mass (15x10x15cm) located in the proximal lateral thigh 12 years after a severe contusion. Clinically as well as radiologically (MRI) it was impossible to distinguish CEH from soft-tissue neoplasm. Initially, multiple marginal biopsies were taken and the histological evaluation revealed the diagnosis of an old hematoma. One week later the mass and pseudo-capsule were completely excised.

RESULTS

The postoperative course was uneventful and the patient discharged home after 9 days. Definitive histological findings confirmed CEH, since no tumor, cyst or other abnormalities were found within the specimen.

CONCLUSION

Whereas the diagnosis of acute hematoma is relatively easy, the one of CEH is rather difficult to differentiate from soft-tissue tumors. Furthermore, approximately 5% of malignant fibrous histiocytomas are associated with hematomas.2

However, it is important to consider a suddenly expanding soft tissue mass being a CEH even when the mass has been present for decades. After excluding malignancy by biopsies, CEH is best treated by complete surgical excision always together with the pseudo-capsule in order to prevent any recurrence.

REFERENCES

1. Reid JD et al. JAMA 1980;255:2441