Early View Article: Online published version of an accepted article before publication in the final form.

Journal Name: International Journal of Hepatobiliary and Pancreatic Diseases (IJHPD)

Type of Article: Clinical Images

Title: Primary non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma of liver

Authors: Daniel Vasilev Kostov, Georgi Leonidov Kobakov, Daniel Veselov Yankov

doi: To be assigned

Received: 2\textsuperscript{nd} September 2014
Accepted: 4\textsuperscript{th} September 2014


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AUTHORS:
Daniel Vasilev Kostov¹, Georgi Leonidov Kobakov², Daniel Veselov Yankov³

AFFILIATIONS:
¹MD, PhD, MSc Professor of Surgery, Director, Department of Surgery, Naval Hospital of Varna, BG-9010 Varna, 3 Hristo Smirnenski Street, Bulgaria. Email ID: danielkostov@abv.bg
²MD, Ph.D, Professor of Surgery, Director, Department of Oncologic Surgery, Division of Surgery, Marko Markov Interregional Dispensary and Hospital of Oncological Diseases, BG-9010 Varna, 3 Hristo Smirnenski Street, Bulgaria. Email ID: glkobakov@yahoo.co.uk
³MD, Ph.D, Department of Surgery, Naval Hospital of Varna, BG-9010 Varna, 3 Hristo Smirnenski Street, Bulgaria. Email ID: yankovplastics@yahoo.com

CORRESPONDING AUTHOR DETAILS
Daniel Vasilev Kostov, MD, PhD, MSc Professor of Surgery, Director, Department of Surgery, Naval Hospital of Varna, BG-9010 Varna, 3 Hristo Smirnenski Street, Bulgaria.
Telephone No: +359 888 954 829, Fax No: +359 52 302650
Email ID: danielkostov@abv.bg

Short Running Title: Primary hepatic lymphoma

Guarantor of Submission: The corresponding author is the guarantor of submission.
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CASE REPORT

A 65-year-old man presented his primary care physician with a 2-month history of constipation, upper right abdominal pain and occasional right groin pain. His past medical history included hypertension and hepatitis B from which he had recovered (HBsAg negative). The biochemical analysis revealed the following levels of alanine transaminase–35U/L, aspartate transaminase–38U/L and a bilirubin level of 26mmol/l with normal blood count. The result of quantitative HBV DNA revealed an undetectable viral load which is generally lower than 300 copies/mL. Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) of the abdomen, showed a mass in the right lobe of the liver with a diameter of 10 cm, located on the right hemiliver (Figure 1A). The examination of tumors markers established the following values of cancer antigen 19-9 - 57.3 IU/mL (normal range <27), carcinoma antigen 15-3 - 29.6 IU/mL (normal range <5), and cancer antigen 125 - 72.4 IU/mL (normal range <35). Alpha-fetoprotein and carcinoembryonic antigen were within normal range. Liver biopsy confirmed the patient to have a non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma, staining positive for CD20 lymphocytes. The patient was diagnosed with primary large B-cell lymphoma of the liver stage IE (stage I), given that no additional foci of lymphoma were found anywhere else in the body. A decision was made that the patient has to undergo an operation. Intraoperative findings showed a large tumour mass with a diameter of 10 cm in the right hemiliver which necessitated a right hemihepatectomy (Figure 1B,C). A histomorphological examination of the resected specimen showed large lymphoid cells varying in shape from oval to round vesicular nuclei containing fine chromatin (Figure 2A). The immunohistochemical findings were positive for the pan-B-cell marker CD20, as well as LCA, and CD43. Immunostaining of the liver lesion showed reactivity for CD3, CD5, CD10, CD138, MUM1, bcl6, and bcl2 (Figure 2B). Ki67 (MIB-1) immunostaining detected a high proliferation fraction of lymphoid cells. A highly malignant B-cell non-Hodgkin lymphoma diagnosis was given. A liver resection was followed by 4 cycles of chemotherapy with cyclophosphamide 750 mg/m²–doxorubicin50 mg/m²–vincristine1.4 mg/m²–prednisone 100mg/day-
rituximab 375 mg/m² (CHOP-R). One year postoperatively the patient is in good clinical condition without a recurrence of the lymphoma.

**DISCUSSION**

Primary hepatic lymphoma (PHL) constitutes about 0.4% of the cases of extra nodal non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma, and only about 0.016% of all cases of non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma [1]. While the pathogenesis of PHL is currently unclear there is evidence that it has been associated with Epstein–Barr virus, hepatitis C virus, human immunodeficiency virus, or human T-lymphotropic virus infections, liver cirrhosis, systemic lupus erythematosus, and immunosuppressive therapy [2]. The tumour arises from lymphoid elements in the liver, and it is defined by the following clinical criteria: (i) no evidence of palpable superficial lymphadenopathy and no enlargement of mediastinal nodes; (ii) a normal leukocyte count; (iii) at surgery, the liver mass predominates with involved lymph nodes confined to the perihepatic region and no splenic involvement. Extranodal lymphoma is classified as secondary if there is involvement of lymph nodes, except for those of an adjacent primary organ or with more than one extra nodal site. The diffused large B-cell is the most common type of non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma, and more than 50 % of patients have some extra-nodal lesions [3]. To diagnose a PHL it is necessary for the liver biopsy to coincident with lymphoma and an absence of a lymphoproliferative disease outside the liver. Late diagnosis, however, or failure to make a diagnosis can end up in fulminant hepatic failure and ultimately death. The optimal treatment for PHL has not yet been defined. Many reports have suggested that surgical resection followed by adjuvant chemotherapy and/or radiation results in better prognosis [4]. The current indications that necessitate a surgery are cases of patients with a localized disease that can undergo radical liver resection or if there is presence of a persistent respectable disease followed by chemotherapy [5]. Chemotherapy with CHOP-R based regimens is the gold standard [6].
CONCLUSION

Primary non-Hodgkin's lymphoma of the liver is a rare variation of lymphoma and making a precise diagnosis presents a challenge in clinical practice. MRI findings of primary and secondary lymphoma may not be sufficient to render a specific diagnosis, especially when liver involvement is the first or only finding. Rather, other parameters must be considered, including a liver biopsy with a histopathological examination.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

NONE

REFERENCES


Table 1:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary lymphoma of the liver</th>
<th>Secondary involvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. No evidence of palpable superficial lymphadenopathy</td>
<td>Evidence of palpable superficial lymphadenopathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. No enlargement of mediastinal nodes</td>
<td>Enlargement of mediastinal nodes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Normal leukocyte count</td>
<td>High leukocyte count</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. At surgery, the liver mass predominates, with involved lymph nodes confined to the perhepatic region.</td>
<td>Involved paraaortic and mesenterial lymph nodes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. No splenic involvement</td>
<td>Splenic involvement</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Primary hepatic lymphoma is defined according to Caccamo’s criteria as lymphoma confined only to the liver without the involvement of any other organ like spleen, bone marrow, lymph nodes, peripheral blood, or other tissues until at least six months after diagnosis.

Figure Legends

Figure 1: (A) Magnetic resonance imaging of the abdomen, showed a tumour in the right lobe of the liver. (B) Intraoperative view of the lesion. (C) A primary hepatic lymphoma specimen after a right hemihepatectomy.

Figure 2: (A) Infiltration of large lymphoid cells (haematoxylin and eosin stain, original magnification ×40). (B) A photomicrograph shows tumour cells positive for CD20, proving B-cell lineage (immunohistochemical stain, magnification x400).
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