Incidental metastatic endocrine tumor diagnosed at laparoscopic radical prostatectomy and bilateral lymph node dissection

Alistair George Rogers, Antony Darné1, Naeem A Soomro
Department of Urology, Freeman Hospital, NE7 7DN, Department of Histopathology, Royal Victoria Infirmary, Newcastle-upon-Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE1 4LP, UK

ABSTRACT

The introduction and expansion of laparoscopic and robotic radical retropubic prostatectomy (LRRP and RRRP) for organ-confined prostate cancer have led to an increase in pelvic lymphadenectomy specimens. Extended lymph node dissection (eLND) involves removing nodes over the obturator fossa, external iliac vessels as well as the internal iliac and increases the number of nodes examined. This has the potential to increase incidental nonprostatic nodal pathology identified in prostatectomy specimens. For the first time in the current literature we report the incidental diagnosis of a metastatic small bowel endocrine tumor in a 69-year-old gentleman, made at the time of LRRP and bilateral lymph node dissection. This report suggests that the benefit of an extended lymph node dissection is not only to prostate cancer control and staging, but also to the possibility of diagnosing potentially treatable incidental disease. It is a possibility that both pathologists and urologists alike should be aware of.

Key words: Endocrine tumor, lymph node dissection, radical prostatectomy

INTRODUCTION

Over recent years there has been the introduction and expansion of laparoscopic and robotic radical retropubic prostatectomy (LRRP and RRRP) for organ-confined prostate cancer. Currently there is no consensus as to when an extended pelvic lymph node dissection (eLND) should be performed in conjunction with LRRP.1 There is evidence to suggest that it should be performed in intermediate disease where the estimated risk of positive nodes is 15--40%.2 We do not perform eLND in low risk disease (PSA<10, Gleason score <7) due to the low probability of nodal disease in this group. Due to the paucity of literature on incidental nodal pathology at LRRP, there are no studies, to the best of our knowledge, that directly correlate the increased use of LRRP and eLND in the last 10 years with an increase in the diagnosis of incidental nodal pathology. However it would appear plausible to suggest that the more the patients who have lymph nodes removed with procedures such as LRRP, the more likely the fact that incidental disease will be identified. Here we report for the first time a case of metastatic neuroendocrine tumor, diagnosed at LRRP and eLND.

CASE REPORT

A 69-year-old gentleman presented to our department with a PSA of 16 and mild lower urinary tract symptoms. Prostatic biopsies demonstrated adenocarcinoma, Gleason score 3+3=6 in 25% of cores from the right side of the prostate. A bone scan was negative for distant metastasis and magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) revealed no abnormal lymph nodes, but did suggest possible T3 disease anteriorly [Figure 1]. In view of this, eLND was performed in conjunction with laparoscopic radical prostatectomy. In a prostate weighing 60 g histology revealed multifocal adenocarcinoma, Gleason score 3+4=7, with a positive basal margin (stage pT3a). He made an uneventful recovery, with undetectable PSA postoperatively.
Histological examination of the lymph nodes revealed a single node infiltrated by a low-grade endocrine tumor. The morphology was difficult to interpret although immunohistochemical analysis revealed strong staining for chromogranin. The regional neuroendocrine multidisciplinary team (MDT) requested pentreotide and computed tomography (CT) scanning. These identified a presumed small bowel primary in the terminal ileum and solitary liver metastasis [Figures 2 and 3]. He underwent a laparotomy, right hemicolectomy with lymph node dissection, and liver resection. Histology demonstrated an endocrine tumor of the terminal ileum with metastases involving 6/11 lymph nodes [Figure 4]. Synaptophysin and chromogranin were strongly positive and the Ki67 proliferation index was <2%, consistent with a grade 1 endocrine tumor (WHO classification: Well differentiated endocrine carcinoma; low grade malignant). The final staging was pT4 N1 M1.

**DISCUSSION**

Pathologies other than prostate carcinoma can cause abnormalities in lymph nodes taken at LRRP and RRRP. This however is unusual with a frequency of 1.8% in a series of 854 patients.\(^3\) In a study of incidentally diagnosed lymphomas, 18 cases were identified from a cohort of 1,160 prostatectomies (1.5%).\(^4\) Lymphomas (B cell, lymphocytic, and follicular), histiocytosis following prosthetic joint replacement, noncaseating granulomas, and foreign body reactions have all been described [Table 1]. Although lymphomas are the most frequent malignant diagnosis, histiocytosis secondary to joint replacement was nearly three times more frequent.\(^3\) This is the first report in the literature of a neuroendocrine tumor diagnosed in a lymphadenectomy specimen taken with prostatectomy. The prompt investigation and evaluation post-prostatectomy enabled aggressive surgical resection with a curative intent.

The clinical outcome of incidentally found pathology in pelvic lymphadenectomy specimens is not clearly defined.

| Author      | Year | Patients (n=) | Dates of procedures | No. of incidental findings | Commonest finding                                      | Other findings                                      |
|-------------|------|---------------|---------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| Winstanley\(^3\) | 2002 | 854           | 1988–2001           | 15 (1.8%)                  | Histiocytosis post joint replacement (8)              | Granulomas (3) Lymphoma (3) Foreign body reaction (1) |
| Chu\(^4\)    | 2005 | 1,160         | 1989–2004           | 10 (0.8%)                  | Lymphoma (only lymphoma diagnosis reviewed)           | Long term outcome from this cohort was good (He 2007\(^7\)) |
One report suggests that in pelvic node malignant B-cell lymphoms, detected at the time of radical prostatectomy, the prognosis is good in the majority of patients.\(^5\) However it should be noted that from the pathologist's viewpoint certain lymphomas can be difficult to differentiate from chronic lymphoid hyperplasia.\(^4\)

Staging lymphadenectomy can provide useful information for prostate cancer prognosis and provide some therapeutic advantage.\(^1\) An eLND involves removal of nodes overlying the external iliac and vein, the obturator fossa (cranially and caudally to obturator nerve), medial and lateral to the internal iliac artery [Figure 5]. Some have also suggested removal of the nodes over the common iliac. To be representative a mean of 20 nodes should be sampled. A limited LND involves approximately 8-10 nodes in the region of the external iliac and obturator fossa and reports suggest that this will miss up to half of potentially affected nodes by prostate cancer.\(^2\) There are no data to corroborate whether limited LND is as good as eLND in identifying incidental nodal disease. However, just as limited LND can miss potentially half of affected lymph nodes in prostate cancer, it is not an unreasonable assumption to suggest that it would be less likely to identify lymph nodes in prostate cancer than eLND. Despite this, the disadvantages of eLND, namely technical difficulty, increasing operative time, and increased complication rate (up to three times) than with limited LND, mean that we would not advocate performing eLND for every patient. Rather each patient’s criteria for eLND or limited LND should be assessed on an individual basis and patients clearly counseled regarding the benefits, as well as risks, of eLND. However this report does suggest that the
benefit of an extended lymph node dissection is not only to prostate cancer control and staging, but also to the possibility of diagnosing potentially treatable incidental disease.

Although it is more pressing for pathologists to have an acute awareness of the possibility of nonprostatic pathology being diagnosed in lymphadenectomy specimens, it is also important that urological surgeons understand this concept. These incidental diagnoses may be clinically relevant and necessitate prompt referral to other specialties for appropriate management of newly diagnosed disease.

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