INTRODUCTION

Kaposi sarcoma (KS) is an angioproliferative disorder. While the head and neck KS is common in HIV-positives, it is rare in HIV-negatives. Our case and the past 24 reported cases of ear KS reviewed here highlight the importance of considering KS in the differential diagnosis of ear lesions in HIV-negatives.

Kaposi sarcoma (KS) is a rare borderline angioproliferative disorder characterized by multiple vascular mucosal or cutaneous lesions.1

It has four major types: classic (predominantly in elderly men) (CKS), African endemic (AEKS), immunosuppression associated or transplant-associated (ITKS), and AIDS-associated.2,3

The classic form typically presents with cutaneous lesions on the lower extremities.1 While the head and neck are the common sites for mucocutaneous lesions in HIV patients with KS, the presence of lesions on the head and neck in HIV-negative patients is a rare phenomenon.4,5

Among the reported cases of Kaposi sarcoma, auricular involvement is very rare. In a study of 11 KS cases presented on head and neck, though the majority of cases were HIV-positive, the two patients with KS lesions on their external ears were both HIV-negative. Therefore, they highlighted the importance of considering KS as a differential diagnosis for vascular lesions on the ears of HIV-negative patients.6 This study aims to present a case of HIV-negative patient with multiple recurrent papules on his ear diagnosed as Kaposi sarcoma that developed KS lesions on his foot years later with a review of literature on KS presented on ears (Table 1).

CASE PRESENTATION

A 43-year-old man was first presented to our dermatology clinic in 2014 with multiple erythematous dome-shaped papules on his right auricle. He has had these lesions from 6 months before his presentation to our clinic (Figure 1A). A biopsy was taken from his auricular papules at that
**TABLE 1** Clinical features of external ear Kaposi sarcoma cases in this study and previous studies

| Case | References | Year | Age/Sex | Race | HIV status | Initial tumor location | Treatment | Outcome/last follow-up | Comorbidities |
|------|------------|------|---------|------|------------|------------------------|-----------|------------------------|--------------|
| 1    | Epstein et al. | 1941 | 37 F    | Japanese | Unknown | Right ear | Excision | During the subsequent 3 years developed two adjacent tumor nodules |
| 2    | Naunton and Stoller | 1960 | 68 M    | North American | Unknown | Right Helix lip | Not mentioned | Not mentioned |
| 3    | Rothman et al. | 1962 | 68/... | Greek | Unknown | Helix of ear | Excision | Recurred after 8 years |
| 4    | Gibbs et al. | 1963 | 73 F    | North American | Unknown | Multiple nodules On each ear Left foot | Not mentioned | Not mentioned |
| 5    | Howland et al. | 1966 | 85/M    | White | Unknown | Lesion on right ear, tongue, chin, and eyelid | Excision, radiation | Died without known disease after 3 years due to atherosclerotic renal disease |
| 6    | Hardy et al. | 1976 | 48/M    | Puerto Rican | Unknown | Lesions on the left ear, left wrist, and both feet | Excision, radiation, bleomycin, and vincristine | Alive and well at 3 years follow-up |
| 7    | Mikkelsen et al. | 1977 | 59/M    | Eskimo | Unknown | Lesions on the right earlobe, feet, legs, and right palm | Radiation therapy; some decrease in size | Died with the disease at 21 months (uremia) |
| 8    | Stearns et al. | 1983 | 66 M    | Indian | Unknown | Left external auditory meatus | Excision | Not mentioned |
| 9    | Gnepp et al. | 1984 | 55 M    | Italian | Unknown | Both pinna and both feet Nasal vestibule | Biopsy and radiation therapy | Alive and well at 17 years with the disease |
| 10   | Babuccu et al. | 2003 | 36 M    | White | Negative | Left pinna | Excision | During a 2-year follow-up, no recurrences, no new lesions, or HIV seroconversion were detected |
| 11   | Hussein et al. | 2008 | 3 M     | Egyptian | Negative | Dorsum of the right ear. Cutaneous dissemination. Lymph node | Not mentioned | Not mentioned | Severe lymphocytopenia |

(Continues)
| Case | References     | Year | Age/Sex | Race   | HIV status | Initial tumor location | Treatment                                      | Outcome/last follow-up                                      | Comorbidities                                                                 |
|------|----------------|------|---------|--------|------------|------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 12   | Altunay et al.  | 2012 | 27 M    | Turkish| Negative   | Right helix, mental region, the right retroauricular region. Tip of the nose | Chemotherapy and radiotherapy                     | Not mentioned                                                     |                                                                                 |
| 13   | Colletti et al. | 2013 | 57 M    | Italian| Negative   | Right/left helix       | Excision                                       | During a 3-year follow-up no involvements of visceral organs, no changes in his health conditions |                                                                                 |
| 14   | Izquierdo Cuenca et al. | 2013 | 81 M    | White  | Negative   | Right pinna            | Not mentioned                                   | Not mentioned                                                     |                                                                                 |
| 15   | Busi et al.     | 2014 | 72 F    | White  | Negative   | Right pinna and external auditory canal. Multiple lesions on the right arm and leg | Local medication with gentamicin and betamethasone | After 18 months, no other localizations have appeared in the external ear | History of tuberculosis and non-Hodgkin lymphoma                    |
| 16   | Francés et al.  | 2016 | 77 F    | Spanish| Negative   | Anterior helix of the right pinna | Excision                                       | During 2 years of follow-up, no recurrences, or new immunosuppressive diseases |                                                                                 |
| 17   | Rachadi et al.  | 2016 | 64 F    | Moroccan| Negative  | Left pinna Visceral involvement (stomach, colon, liver, and spleen) | Bleomycin                                       | Improvement                                                       | A case of bullous pemphigoid under treatment with corticosteroid         |
| 18   | Chai et al.     | 2018 | 47 M    | Chinese| Positive   | Right external auditory canal | Excision tenofovir, lamivudine, efavirenz       | After follow-up for 2 years, no local recurrence or metastasis      |                                                                                 |
| 19   | Agaimy et al.   | 2018 | 60 F    | German | Negative   | Skin ear (pinna)        | Excision                                       | Alive with no evidence of disease after 46 months follow-up       |                                                                                 |
| Case | References | Year | Age/Sex | Race | HIV status | Initial tumor location | Treatment | Outcome/last follow-up | Comorbidities |
|------|------------|------|---------|------|------------|------------------------|-----------|-----------------------|---------------|
| 20   | Agaimy et al.6 | 2018 | 78 M    | German | Negative   | External auditory canal, Disseminated KS on all Extremities 1 month after excision of ear lesion | Excision, 5 cycles liposomal Doxorubicin for disseminated disease | Alive, ongoing remission after 18 months of follow-up |
| 21   | Baykal et al.25 | 2019 | 50 M    | Turkish | Negative   | Ears, Upper and lower extremity, penis, Urethra | Sirolimus, excision, radiotherapy, chemotherapy | Relapse and dissemination after transplantation, showing no response to therapy, remission following transplant rejection | A case of kidney transplantation receiving azathioprine, corticosteroid, Mycophenolate mofetil |
| 22   | Baykal et al.25 | 2019 | 16 F    | Turkish | Negative   | Ear, upper and lower extremity, face, bone | IFN-alpha, chemotherapy | No remission in a 10-year follow-up | A case of Congenital immunodeficiency |
| 23   | Rupp et al.26 | 2019 | 79 M    | Swiss   | Negative   | Left ear’s concha | Excision local external beam radiotherapy | Free of disease after 15 months of clinical and radiological follow-up. |
| 24   | McNally et al.27 | 2020 | 72 M    | American | Positive   | Enlarged right pinna (verrucous, papulonodules lesions) left antitragus | Not mentioned | Not mentioned |
| 25   | Etesami et al. | 2020 | 43 M    | Iranian | Negative   | Right auricle Lower extremities | Total excision | Recurred after 4 and 6 years |

**TABLE 1 (Continued)**
time. While our most probable clinical impression was Angiolymphoid hyperplasia with eosinophilia (ALHE) or pseudolymphoma, the microscopic evaluation was consistent with KS (Figure 2A–E). Histopathologic examination of a skin biopsy from the ear showed nodular proliferation of spindled endothelial cells arranged in intersecting fascicles with intervening slit and sieve-like vascular channels. There were some blood-filled vascular spaces between spindled cells with red blood cell extravasation and patchy infiltrate of lymphocytes and plasma cells (Figure 2A,B). Some mitotic figures and apoptotic bodies were also identified. Immunohistochemistry staining reveals positive immunoreaction of tumor cells for CD31 and CD34 as well as HHV8 which show nuclear immunoreactivity (Figure 2C–E).

Because his lesions were limited to his ear, the lesions were totally excised (Figure 1B). In 2018, he was presented to our clinics with recurrence of one solitary papule on his right ear, the papule was totally excised, and the histopathology was consistent with KS again. The patient did not come back for further evaluation at that time. In April 2020, he was presented to our clinic with the recurrence of papules on his right ear and the development of an erythematous plaque on his right foot since a year ago. Two biopsies were taken from his ear and foot lesions that both were consistent with KS. Routine laboratory evaluations including complete blood count

**FIGURE 1** (A) Multiple erythematous dome-shaped papules on the right auricle, (B) after total excision

**FIGURE 2** (A) Intersecting fascicles of spindled cells with intervening slit- and sieve-like vascular spaces surrounded by patchy lymphoplasmacytic infiltrate (H&E x10), (B) high power of intersecting fascicles with blood-filled, sieve-like vascular channels (H&E x20), positive immunoreaction for CD31 (C), CD34 (D), and HHV8 (E) which shows nuclear immunoreaction
count (CBC), liver, and renal function tests were normal, and HIV test was negative. The patient was otherwise healthy without any history of immunodeficiency. He was not taking any medication.

3 | DISCUSSION

While oral (59.1%) and craniofacial (43.9%) involvement is common in HIV-positives,1 Kaposi sarcoma of the head and neck is rare (approximately <5% of the KS cases) in the HIV-negative individuals.6 The most common presentation of KS in HIV-positives is multiple bilateral lesions of the lower extremities.7 Among the head and neck KS, the incidence of auricular involvement is much lower, so it should be considered a distinct manifestation. The presence of a recurrent, auricular KS with an atypical presentation in a young immunocompetent individual is a very rare finding.

In this article, we presented a case of recurrent KS on the ear with a literature review on ear KS cases (Table 1).5,6,8–27 The literature review disclosed 24 cases since the year 1941 until 2020, highlighting the rarity of this presentation. Sixteen males and seven females aged 3–85 years (median, 62 years; mean, 57.4 years) were retrieved. Of these 24 cases of ear skin KS, two cases were HIV-positive,24,27 13 cases were HIV-negative,6,16–23,25,26 and others were unknown. Among these, four cases had visceral involvement including lymph node, bone, urethra, stomach, colon, liver, and spleen, and the rest were limited to the skin including just limited to the auricle (n = 11), ear and mucosal sites (n = 4), ear and extremities (n = 9), and ear and other sites in the head and neck region (chin and eyelid) (n = 3). Among the 13 HIV-negatives, five cases had some degrees of immunosuppression (one case kidney transplantation,25 one case congenital immunodeficiency,25 one case receiving systemic corticosteroid,23 one case non-Hodgkin lymphoma,21 and the last a case of severe lymphocytopenia17). While excision was the most common treatment option, other modalities were antiretroviral medications for HIV-positives, radiotherapy and chemotherapy with liposomal doxorubicin, bleomycin, vincristine, and IFN-alpha for more widespread disease. Among 17 cases that their follow-up was available, ranging from 15 months to 17 years, the majority of them were free of disease after the initial treatment (n = 12), three cases had recurrent lesions, one case was alive with disease, and one died with disease because of uremia. While KS in HIV-negative patients has an indolent course, our case was highly recurrent, despite total excision with free margins, it has recurred twice in 5 years, and after that, a new lesion on the foot appeared. So the recurrence rate of the KS in the ear needs to be further studied.

While KS pathogenesis is multifactorial and both genetic and environment are responsible, human herpes virus 8 (HHV8) is the main causal factor in the development of KS in all variants irrespective of the clinicopathological setting of the disease.4,28 HHV8 contributes to cell growth, signaling apoptosis, angiogenesis, and immunomodulation. It produces some proteins that inhibit host adaptive and innate immunity.1,4 While the increased risk of KS in HIV-positives and iatrogenically immunosuppressed cases is well understood, the occurrence in immunologically competent individuals remains largely unelucidated.7 Agaimy et al.6 hypothesized that maybe impaired local immunosurveillance and pro-inflammatory cytokines release is the causative factor. Although the exact reason why the ear is a predilection site in HIV-negative patients who develop KS in head and neck region is not clear, Francés et al.22 proposed that in addition to some factors such as trauma and infection in acral sites, insufficient vascularization makes it difficult for immune system to access.

Due to the rarity of head and neck, KS, especially in HIV-negative patients, unusual presentations of KS may be challenging if not considered in the differential diagnosis. The occurrence of KS in atypical sites like ear leads to recognition and misdiagnosis. The possibility of occult HIV infection should be considered beside. They may be misdiagnosed as other spindle cell tumors pathologically or other vascular lesions such as ALHE clinically. HHV8 immunohistochemistry was positive in 95% of KS lesions irrespective of HIV positivity, so it is a good marker to detect KS.

In summary, we presented a case of recurrent ear KS in a young HIV-negative and otherwise healthy individual with a review of the literature on 24 cases of ear KS from 1941 to 2020 implicating ear as a predilection site for head and neck KS in HIV-negative patients; therefore, we highly suggest to consider KS as a differential diagnosis for lesions on ears.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None declared.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION

IE: has made substantial contributions to conception and design, acquisition of data, analysis and interpretation of data, drafting the manuscript, and revising it critically, given final approval of the version to be published. YK: has made substantial contributions to conception and design, acquisition of data, analysis and interpretation of data, drafting the manuscript, and revising it critically. AG: has made substantial contributions to conception and design, acquisition of data, analysis and interpretation of data, drafting the manuscript, and revising it critically. AR: has made substantial contributions to conception and design, acquisition of data, analysis and interpretation of data, drafting the manuscript, and revising it critically.
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ETHICAL APPROVAL
The study was approved by ethical committee of Tehran University of Medical Sciences. Informed consent was obtained from the patient.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT
Author elects to not share data.

ORCID
Yasamin Kalantari https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8443-4591
Azadeh Rezayat https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6612-5573

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