INTRODUCTION

Ganglion cysts usually arise close to joints and tendons. The cysts are attached to an underlying joint capsule or tendon sheath by a narrow stalk. Most often they are encountered over the dorsum of the hand or wrist, but they can occur in any part of the body, wherever periarticular or tendinous connective tissue is present.

We report a ganglion cyst originating from the sternoclavicular joint of an adult. To our knowledge, there have been only two papers that reported ganglion cysts of the sternoclavicular joint [1,2]. However, most of these cases involved children, and one of the two papers did not focus on the ganglion cyst but on serous synovitis of the sternoclavicular joint. Therefore, this is the first report of a ganglion cyst of the sternoclavicular joint developing in an adult.

CASE REPORT

A 76-year-old woman was referred to our department because of a painless mass over the right sternoclavicular joint. The lesion was first recognized 3 months earlier. It was felt to have slightly increased in size. There was no history of trauma or evidence of diabetes, hypertension, or rheumatoid arthritis. On physical examination, the mass was found to be firm, round, smooth, and 1.5×1.5 cm in size in the subcutaneous tissue. The mass was not tender to palpation, and it was firmly fixed to the sternoclavicular joint. The overlying skin and subcutaneous tissue was freely movable. Neither ultrasonography, computed tomography, nor magnetic resonance imaging of the sternoclavicular joint was performed.

Excisional biopsy revealed that, intraoperatively, the wall of the cyst was thin, firmly elastic, and sharply outlined, and it contained amorphous, gelatinous material (Fig. 1). The stalk was directed toward the sternoclavicular joint. The mass was excised along with the portion of the sternoclavicular joint capsule surrounding the stalk. Histopathologic examination showed the cyst wall to be composed of compressed collagen fibers without evidence of an epithelial or synovial lining, which was consistent with ganglion cyst. To our knowledge, this is the first report of such a cyst in an adult. We consider this to be a useful report for surgeons that treat mass lesions occurring in almost any part of the body surface.

Keywords: Ganglion cysts / Joint capsule / Sternoclavicular joint

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epithelial or synovial lining, which was consistent with ganglion
cyst (Fig. 2). There has been no evidence of recurrence 11 months
postoperatively.

**DISCUSSION**

Ganglion cysts are most common on the upper extremities such
as the dorsal or volar aspect of the wrist, flexor tendon sheath, and
distal interphalangeal joint of fingers. Less commonly, they have
been reported to arise about the foot, the popliteal fossa, and the
shoulder. However, there have been few papers reporting ganglion
cysts of the sternoclavicular joint, with most of these cases devel-
oping in children [1,2]. Haber et al. [1] reported five children with
a ganglion cyst of the sternoclavicular joint (aged from 13 months
to 9 years). About 30 years ago, Kofoed et al. [2] reported on the
differential diagnostic aspects of 17 patients with spontaneous
swelling of the sternoclavicular joint, of which two were found to
have a ganglion cyst. However, the results were limited because
they devoted most of the space to an explanation of serous synovi-
tis, and the two patients with a ganglion cyst were not considered
in the details of their demographics [2]. Of their 17 patients, the 10
with serous synovitis were adults, and the rest had ganglion cysts
(2), osteomyelitis (2), osteoarthritis (1), metastasis (1), and
Friedrich’s disease (1). Of these, three were children. Therefore,
there was a high probability that the two patients with ganglion
cysts were children.

Our differential diagnosis for the cystic mass of the sternocla-
vascular joint in adults includes synovial cyst. Synovial cysts and
ganglion cysts are morphologically similar because both are filled
with viscid fluid; in the past, these terms have been erroneously
considered to be synonymous. However, their histologic features
are different. Ganglion cysts have a fibrous tissue lining, whereas
synovial cysts have a lining with cuboidal or flattened cells consis-
tent with a synovial origin. Further, synovial cysts around in-
volved joints are common in patients with rheumatoid arthritis.
To our knowledge, there have been two papers that reported syn-
ovial cysts originating from the sternoclavicular joint in adults, in
which all patients had rheumatoid arthritis [3,4].

Surgical excision is the most effective method of treatment for
ganglion cysts. Excision of the main cyst only, without the con-
necting joint capsule, has resulted in a recurrence rate of 30% to
40% [5]. Since the adoption of complete excision with removal of a
small portion of the joint capsule at the base of the stalk, recur-
rence rates have improved significantly. Our excision, which in-
cluded the portion of the sternoclavicular joint capsule surround-
ning the stalk, obtained a favorable result.

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*Fig. 1.* Intraoperative view showing that the cyst over the right sternocla-
vicular joint had a thin, firmly elastic, and sharply outlined wall, containing amorphous, gelatinous material.

*Fig. 2.* Photomicrograph showing that the wall of the mass consisted of fibrous tissue (black arrow) without a definite cellular lining (H&E, ×40).
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