Small Cystic Pancreatic Neuroendocrine Neoplasm with Huge Liver and Bone Metastases

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Abstract:
Pancreatic neuroendocrine neoplasms occasionally have a cystic component. We herein report a case of multiple hepatic tumors, including a huge one and a 24-mm sized pancreatic cystic lesion. The hepatic tumor showed an enhancement pattern consistent with hepatic adenoma. The pancreatic cystic lesion revealed a thickened outside border and a solid inside component, which was enhanced following a contrast study, suggesting cystic pancreatic neuroendocrine neoplasm. Surgical resection was performed. After the surgery, somatostatin receptor scintigraphy detected an occult lumbar spine metastasis. Huge multiple liver and bone metastases of the neuroendocrine neoplasm G2 component were seen, with a G1 small primary lesion.

Key words: pancreatic neuroendocrine neoplasm, cystic change, liver metastasis, endoscopic ultrasonography

(Intern Med 59: 3027-3032, 2020)
(DOI: 10.2169/internalmedicine.5038-20)

Introduction
Pancreatic neuroendocrine neoplasms (PNENs) have been regarded as a relatively rare disease. However, in recent years, there has been an increase in the number of reported incidences owing to the progress of diagnostic imaging. Some cases exhibit unusual imaging findings and unusual progression.

We herein report a case of a small, cystic PNEN G1 with bulky G2 liver metastasis that had some uncommon features.

Case Report
We encountered a 37-year-old woman who complained of a persistent low-grade fever. She had been taking oral contraceptives for irregular periods for five years.

On an examination, she showed no abnormal findings except for a slight fever (37.1°C). Laboratory findings, including aspartate aminotransferase, alanine aminotransferase, amylase, carcinoembryonic antigen, carbohydrate antigen 19-9, α-fetoprotein, protein induced by vitamin K absence or antagonist-II, and progastrin-releasing peptide, were within normal ranges. Neuron-specific enolase was 24.5 ng/mL (normal: ≥16.3 ng/mL).

A 10-cm mixed echoic hepatic nodule in the right lobe and a 2-cm cystic lesion with a septal wall in the pancreatic tail end were found on abdominal ultrasound. On multidetector computed tomography (MDCT), we observed a hepatic tumor showing heterogeneous hyperenhancement during the arterial phase and washout of the contrast enhancement during the delayed phase. The pancreatic cystic lesion seemed to have a capsule-like rim structure (Fig. 1). On T2-weighted imaging (T2WI) of magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), the hepatic tumor showed a high signal intensity and mild diffusion restriction on diffusion-weighted imaging and apparent diffusion coefficient imaging. The pancreatic lesion displayed a high signal and slit-shaped low signal on T2WI (Fig. 2). On gadolinium ethoxybenzyl diethylenetriaminopentaacetic acid (Gd-EOB-DTPA) enhancement MRI (EOB-MRI), the hepatic tumor demonstrated early enhancement with a poor-contrast central scar-like structure and washout during the portal venous and hepatobiliary phases (20 min) (Fig. 3). Following the initial evaluation, we performed endoscopic ultrasonography (EUS) using an oblique viewing echoendoscope (UCT-260, Olympus, Tokyo, Japan). A 24-mm sized cystic lesion with lateral shadowing and isoechoic and anechoic components was observed. Communication be-
Figure 1. CT scan: a: The non-contrast phase showing a 10-cm low-density area in the posterior segment (triangle) and a 2-cm cystic lesion with capsule-like rim (arrow), b: the hepatic tumor showing heterogeneous hyper enhancement in the arterial phase, c: washout of the contrast enhancement during the delayed phase. The pancreatic lesion showing rim and intra-cystic component enhancement.

Figure 2. a: The pancreatic lesion (arrow) showing an intra-cystic slit-shaped component on T1WI, b: high signal on T2WI, c, d: no abnormal signal on diffusion-weighted or apparent diffusion coefficient imaging.

tween the cyst and the main pancreatic duct was not seen. Contrast-enhanced EUS using Sonazoid® (Daiichi-Sankyo, Tokyo, Japan) showed distinct enhancement in the outer border of the cystic wall and a solid inside component (Fig. 4). This lesion was suggestive of cystic degeneration of the solid neoplasm rather than the septal wall of cystic one.

At this point, we proposed several possible diagnoses for this hepatic tumor, including hepatic adenoma due to the blood supply pattern. Focal nodule hyperplasia (FNH) was also included in the differential diagnosis. As for the pancreatic lesion, PNEN with cystic degeneration and mucinous cystic neoplasm (MCN) were the differential diagnoses.

Fluorodeoxyglucose-positron emission tomography (FDG-PET) revealed no FDG accumulation in the hepatic tumor and pancreatic cystic lesion, with no findings suggestive of distant organ metastasis.

We performed an ultrasound-guided needle biopsy of the hepatic tumor, and the biopsy specimens showed solid and trabecular growth patterns that consisted of relatively uniform cells, finely granular eosinophilic cytoplasm, and a centrally located round to oval nucleus that may demonstrate a distinct nucleolus. This tissue was surrounded by a fibrous envelope that contained some degree of vessels and collagen fiber. Immunohistochemistry was positive for synaptophysin and CD56 with an MIB-1 labeling index of 14.0%. The definite diagnosis of PNEN with cystic change and liver metastasis was made.

Distal pancreatectomy, posterior segmentectomy, and five-part enucleation of the small liver metastasis, which had not been detected on preoperative imaging, were performed.
Figure 3. EOB-MRI: the hepatic tumor (triangle) demonstrated early enhancement with a poor-contrast central scar-like structure and washout during the portal venous and hepatobiliary phases. a: T1WI without contrast, b: arterial phase, c: portal venous phase, d: hepatobiliary phase. EOB-MRI: gadoxetic acid enhanced magnetic resonance imaging

Figure 4. EUS: A 24-mm sized cystic lesion with lateral shadowing and isoechoic and anechoic components is observed. Communication between the cyst and the main pancreatic duct is not seen. Contrast-enhanced EUS shows distinct enhancement in the outer border of the cystic wall and solid inside component. EUS: endoscopic ultrasonography

(Fig. 5, 6). The final diagnosis of PNEN G1 (MIB-1 labeling index: 1.8%) and multiple G2 liver metastasis (MIB-1 labeling index: 15.4%) was also made. No lymph node metastases were detected. The multiple small liver metastases had almost the same MIB-1 labeling index as the huge one. They were unable to detect MDCT, EOB-MRI, or FDG-PET preoperatively; we therefore performed somatostatin receptor scintigraphy (SRS) (Octreoscan®, FUJIFILM, Tokyo, Japan) to look for other occult metastases after the surgery. SRS and gadolinium-enhanced MRI detected an occult lumbar spine metastasis (Fig. 7). In this case, SRS was more useful than FDG-PET to detect bone metastasis.

The patient received chemotherapy with everolimus 10 mg daily and lanreotide 120 mg once every 28 days. A
progression-free survival, as shown by trimonthly computed tomography (CT), was obtained for 10 months.

**Discussion**

PNENs usually have some typical features, such as solid, homogenous, and hypervascular. However, some cases like this have cystic components. Recent studies have investigated the demographics and clinicopathological characteristics of patients with cystic PNENs. These cystic subgroups account for approximately 5-36.1% of all resected PNENs (1-3). Despite the generally indolent nature, it has been recognized that the pathological potential is highly variable, and some cases present at an advanced stage with local invasion and distant metastases (4).

Several mechanisms have been suggested to explain cystic degeneration of PNENs. Historically, the presence of cystic change has been believed to be correlated with increasing tumor size. The increased size of the neoplasm may be due to the fact that the majority of lesions appear to be nonfunctional, so they grow until they are more symptomatic (5). Their development has been theorized to be related to cystic degeneration, secondary to either tumor necrosis or intraleisonal hemorrhaging (6). Bordeianou et al. reported that necrosis was encountered only occasionally, suggesting that necrosis may be a secondary phenomenon rather than the cause of cystic formation. They further noted that cystic PNENs are lined by a ragged cuff of well-preserved endo-

**Figure 5.** Distal pancreatectomy. The cystic neoplasm is growing not invasively but expansively to the adjacent pancreatic parenchyma. Small nests of endocrine tissue are present along the cystic wall. The superficial layers of endocrine cells are separated from the cystic lumen by a layer of fibrous tissue in continuity with the adjacent granulation tissue.

**Figure 6.** Pancreatic cystic neoplasm histopathology. Hematoxylin and Eosin staining: a solid and trabecular growth pattern consisting of relatively uniform cells, finely granular eosinophilic cytoplasm, and centrally located round-to-oval nuclei that may demonstrate a distinct nucleolus (a). Immunostaining was negative for chromogranin A (b) and positive for CD56 (c) and synaptophysin (d).
SRS was able to confirm liver metastases that had been de-
metastases, has been reported. Frilling et al. reported that
tively (8). The usefulness of SRS, especially for extrahepatic
tivity for NET-G2 is reported to be 96% and 73%, respec-
tively (7). SRS detected bone metastasis. We might have to con-
side performing SRS instead of FDG-PET preoperatively to
search for occult metastasis. The SRS and FDG-PET sensi-
tivity for NET-G2 is reported to be 96% and 73%, respec-
tively (8). The usefulness of SRS, especially for extrathoracic
metastases, has been reported. Frilling et al. reported that
SRS was able to confirm liver metastases that had been de-
tected with other conventional imaging methods in all pa-
ients. In addition, 54.2% had extrahepatic tumor lesions not
detected by other imaging techniques (9). SRS might be
useful for identifying candidates suitable for resection.
Although SRS after surgery did not indicate residual liver
metastasis, we suspected that there might be no somatostatin
receptor. We performed histochemical staining of the soma-
tostatin receptor for all resected liver tumors, and a high
SSTR-2 expression was observed. These findings suggested
that there were no residual tumors in the liver.
The present patient developed multiple systemic meta-
statics; nevertheless, the primary tumor was G1. PNEN G1 is
believed to be a less aggressive neoplasm than others. Lee et
al. advocated for the nonoperative management of patients
with incidental, small, nonfunctional PNENs up to 3 cm in
size with Ki-67 values <5% based on a retrospective review
of 77 patients who showed no evidence of significant tumor
growth or disease progression at a mean follow-up of 45
months (10). Among patients with low-grade, small tumors
measuring ≤2 cm, 1 of 39 patients (2.6%) had disease recur-
rence and eventually died (11). Zou et al. reported on the
prognosis after curative surgery; recurrence was observed in
2.9% (5/173) of patients in PNEN G1 (12). Sadot et al.
stated that, in 77 patients with PNENs ≤3 cm in size, in-
cluding 72 patients with G1, 1 had lymph node-positive dis-
ease, and 5 developed recurrence after surgery (13). Our
present patient had multiple G2 liver metastases as well as a
G1 pancreatic neoplasm. The mitotic count varied in the
pancreatic neoplasm, and vascular invasion was seen. A
highly mitotic tumor component in the pancreas may have
metastasized to the liver and bone. Discordance between the
liver metastasis and primary site has been reported. In addi-
tion, 24% of cases reportedly showed the elevation of the
Ki-67 labeling index in metastases. When the grade in-
creased, both the progression-free survival and overall sur-
vival significantly decreased (14).
Conclusion
Cystic degeneration of PNEN requires a differential diag-
noses. In addition, although the cystic PNEN in the present
study was G1 and seemed to be indolent, the liver tumor
was G2, with multiple lesions, enhancement in an uncom-

Figure 7. a: FDG-PET does not detect bone metastasis. b: SRS shows the abnormal accumulation
in the second lumbar vertebra. c: Gadoxetic acid-enhanced MRI confirms a nodule with a contrast
effect. FDG-PET: fluorodeoxyglucose-positron emission tomography, SRS: somatostatin receptor
scintigraphy.
mon pattern, and a huge size relative to the primary pancreatic neoplasm. Bone metastasis was also detected. In the present case, SRS was more useful than FDG-PET for detecting bone metastasis. We encountered a rare case of G1 cystic PNEN with liver and bone metastases of the G2 component.

The authors state that they have no Conflict of Interest (COI).

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