Cholestatic Jaundice as a Paraneoplastic Manifestation of Prostate Cancer Aggravated by Steroid Therapy

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Significance of the Study

- As a paraneoplastic manifestation of advanced prostate cancer, cholestatic jaundice can be exacerbated by the use of steroids and it can be improved by appropriate antiandrogen therapy.

Keywords
Androgen receptor · Bicalutamide · Jaundice · Prostate cancer · Prednisone

Abstract

Objective: To report a rare case of paraneoplastic jaundice as a manifestation of prostate cancer. Clinical Presentation and Intervention: We report on a case of paraneoplastic syndrome in a 72-year-old man with prostate cancer that manifested with idiopathic jaundice. Although steroids can be used as treatment in patients with prostate cancer, they could exacerbate paraneoplastic jaundice. The jaundice that flared up after treatment with 40 mg prednisone was improved with antiandrogen treatment. Conclusion: Physicians should be aware of the possibility of paraneoplastic jaundice in patients with prostate cancer. Appropriate antiandrogen therapy should be considered for paraneoplastic jaundice in these patients.

Introduction

Paraneoplastic cholestasis in patients with prostate cancer, which has been previously shown to improve with the use of antiandrogen agents, has been rarely reported [1–9]. As maintenance therapy for metastatic prostate cancer, corticosteroids have been widely used for decades [10]. Here, we report a patient with metastatic prostate cancer in whom we observed deterioration of paraneoplastic jaundice after a short course of treatment with 40 mg prednisone. The patient showed improvement after antiandrogen treatment.

Case Report

A 72-year-old man visited our emergency department due to jaundice and anorexia which had persisted for 2 months. The results of his physical examination were unremarkable. Liver function tests revealed the following values: serum bilirubin level (SBL), 13.1 mg/dL; serum albumin level, 4.45 g/dL; serum aspartate ami-
notransferase level, 112 IU/L; serum alanine aminotransferase level, 146 IU/L; and prothrombin time-international normalized ratio, 1.1. Serum hepatitis B surface antigen and hepatitis C antigen tests were all negative. Abdominal computed tomography revealed enlargement of the prostate gland and no evidence of obstructive jaundice including intrahepatic ductal dilatation (Fig. 1). The serum prostate-specific antigen level was as high as 7,895 ng/mL (normal range: 0–4 ng/mL). A prostate biopsy revealed adenocarcinoma (Fig. 2), and a liver biopsy revealed a canalicular type of cholestasis without evidence of liver metastasis (Fig. 3).

Despite 20 days of supportive care, the patient’s SBL did not improve. After 3 days of 40 mg prednisone therapy, sudden deterioration of the jaundice was observed. Although the corticosteroid therapy was discontinued, his SBL increased to 25.25 mg/dL. Considering the jaundice to be a paraneoplastic manifestation of prostate cancer, antiandrogen treatments with 50 mg bicalutamide and 3.6 mg goserelin were started. Six days later, his jaundice improved dramatically, with his SBL decreasing to 7.22 mg/dL. Three months after the hormone therapy, his serum prostate-specific antigen level decreased from 7,895 to 311 ng/mL, and his bilirubin level was normalized without any adverse reaction (Fig. 4).

**Discussion**

Cholestatic manifestation of paraneoplastic syndrome in association with prostate cancer is rare. A few previous cases have been reported [1–9] and 7 cases showed improvement after hormone therapy (Table 1). From a therapeutic point of view, corticosteroids have been used to treat metastatic prostate cancer for decades [10]. In con-
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In contrast, we observed a deterioration of paraneoplastic jaundice in a patient with metastatic prostate cancer after a short course of prednisone, which improved after antiandrogen treatment.

Although no convincing pathogenesis was found, we suggest a hypothesis on the cause of the sudden deterioration. The use of corticosteroids in prostate cancer inhibits the secretion of adrenocorticotropic hormone in the pituitary gland, thereby reducing the synthesis of the adrenal androgen hormone, preventing cancer and improving the patient’s symptoms [10]. However, in the literature, corticosteroid use has been associated with the development of resistance to prostate cancer treatment [10, 11]. The interaction of steroid hormones such as corticosteroids and androgens in prostate cancer has not been fully elucidated, especially in terms of growth receptors and androgen receptors (AR) [10]. In advanced stages of prostate cancer, the frequency of AR mutations

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**Table 1. Summary of cases of paraneoplastic cholestatic jaundice of prostate cancer**

| Age, years | Peak bilirubin, mg/dL | Peak PSA, ng/mL | Liver biopsy | Treatment (cancer) | Prognostic outcome |
|------------|-----------------------|-----------------|--------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| Okano et al. [1] | 68 | 23.4 | 15,018 | Lymphocyte infiltration, cholestasis | Bicalutamide | Improved |
| Kuramoto et al. [2] | 75 | 17 | 9,862 | ND | Bicalutamide, leuprolide | Improved |
| Koruk et al. [3] | 77 | 10 | 100 | Normal | Bicalutamide, goserelin | Improved |
| Reddy et al. [4] | 57 | 8 | ND | Lymphocyte infiltration, cholestasis | ND | Intermittent worsening |
| Shah [5] | 64 | 302 | 970 | ND | Goserelin, cyproterone | Unknown |
| Nguyen et al. [6] | 51 | 19 | 556 | ND | Bicalutamide, goserelin | Improved |
| Karakolios et al. [7] | 72 | 19.1 | 150 | ND | Flutamide, leuprolide | Improved |
| Hinostroza-Yanahuaya et al. [8] | 70 | 29 | 1,548 | ND | Conservative treatment | Expired |
| Vieira et al. [9] | 78 | 12.3 | >1,000 | ND | Bicalutamide, goserelin | Improved |
| Our case | 72 | 25.25 | 7,895 | Lymphocyte infiltration, cholestasis | Bicalutamide, goserelin | Improved |

PSA, prostate-specific antigen; ND, not done.

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**Fig. 4.** Clinical course of the patient. ALT, alanine aminotransferase; PSA, prostate-specific antigen (in mg/mL).
is significantly increased [12]. Corticosteroids can activate the mutated AR to manifest an androgenic effect in metastatic prostate cancer, which in turn activates the growth receptor to induce cancer growth and stimulate genes that overlap with AR targets [11]. We suggest that administration of steroids may cause a sudden flare of paraneoplastic cholestasis, with elevation of bilirubin levels.

**Conclusion**

Paraneoplastic cholestasis should be considered when unexplained cholestasis occurs in cancer patients. In addition, paraneoplastic cholestasis due to prostate cancer can be improved with appropriate antiandrogen therapy and may be exacerbated by steroid use.

**Disclosure Statement**

No conflict of interest is reported.

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