A rare case of breast cancer metastasis to the gallbladder

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INTRODUCTION

Breast cancer is the most common cancer affecting women. Metastasis is common and most frequently involves the bone, brain, lung, and liver. Metastasis to uncommon locations, such as the gallbladder, are extremely rare but a few cases have been reported. This case highlights an example of breast cancer metastasis to the gallbladder.

CASE DESCRIPTION

62-year-old female with a history of stage IV triple positive right invasive ductal carcinoma with metastasis to the lung and bone managed on Herceptin and Xeloda presented to the emergency department with epigastric pain, nausea, and vomiting. CT of the abdomen and pelvis showed moderate biliary sludge with gallstones, mild gallbladder wall thickening, and no significant pericholecystic fluid or ductal dilation. Ultrasound of the abdomen revealed cholelithiasis without evidence of pericholecystic fluid or ductal dilation. She was discharged home and followed up for an outpatient cholecystectomy. She underwent an uncomplicated robotic assisted cholecystectomy and was discharged home later that day. Final pathology revealed metastatic adenocarcinoma invading the muscular layer, compatible with a primary breast origin. Given the findings of metastatic breast cancer to the gallbladder, patient had a CT of the chest, abdomen, and pelvis to evaluate for other evidence of metastasis. This scan showed no evidence of new metastatic disease but did note stable sclerotic osseous metastatic disease without new bony lesions. She also underwent a bone scan that showed improved appearance of the osseous metastatic disease. She required no further surgical intervention.

DISCUSSION

Breast cancer metastasis is not uncommon but spread of disease to the gallbladder has been described in only a few case reports. Lobular carcinoma has been shown to spread to the gastrointestinal tract more commonly than ductal carcinoma.[1,2] In general, metastasis to the gallbladder are rare. The most common primary tumor noted to metastasize to the gallbladder is malignant melanoma, which accounts for approximately 15% of cases.[3,4] Other causes of metastasis to the gallbladder include renal cell carcinoma, lung cancer, and breast cancers.[5] This case report details one of the rare examples of breast cancer metastasis that was incidentally found after cholecystectomy.

CONCLUSION

Breast cancer with metastasis to the gallbladder is rare but has been described in a few case reports. These patients may present with typical cholecystitis symptoms. Metastasis to the gallbladder should be considered in the differential diagnosis in patients with a history of primary breast cancer who present with right upper quadrant abdominal pain.

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