

Breast Lipoma in an Elderly Female Mimicking Malignancy

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Abstract

Lipomas of the breast are usually small, benign neoplasms which can be treated by simple excision. Diagnosis of these masses, however, can be difficult because of the normal fatty composition of the breast.^{1,2} A number of radiological investigations have been described for diagnosing deep lipomas in the breast, yet the clinical and radiographic identification of these masses remains challenging. We present a case of 60 year old female with a painless lump in the right breast mimicking breast malignancy.

Introduction

Lipoma is a benign neoplasm containing encapsulated nodules of mature adipose tissue. Lipomas can develop virtually in all organs of the body however they are most frequently seen in subcutaneous tissue.¹ Lipoma of the breast with true capsule is rare. It often causes diagnostic and therapeutic uncertainty particularly in an elderly female when chances of malignancy of breast presenting as a painless lump becomes high. Clinically it may be difficult to distinguish a lipoma from other conditions. Fine-needle aspiration cytology (FNAC) is often not helpful. Both mammography and ultrasound scanning are often negative.

Case Report

A 60 year old female presented with a lump in right breast since 2 months. The lump was gradually increasing in size. There were no complaints of nipple discharge or pain in the lump. There was no previous history of any trauma to the breast. She had no family

history of breast carcinoma. She was married since last 40 years and had two living children. She attained menopause nearly 15 years ago. Physical examination revealed a well circumscribed mass on outer and lower quadrant of the breast measuring 4 cm x 4 cm. The mass was having smooth surface, firm in consistency and limited mobility within breast substance. Skin over the mass and nipple-areola complex was normal. There was no axillary lymphadenopathy. Fine needle aspiration cytology (FNAC) was suggestive of fatty tissue. Her haematological profile was normal. In view of her age and suspicion of malignancy, excision biopsy was performed. Intra-operatively the mass was found to be a globular fatty tissue well surrounded by a capsule (Figs. 1 and 2). Histopathologic examination of the specimen revealed it to be a lipoma of breast with well encapsulated lobules of mature adipocytes separated by fibrovascular septae. There was no evidence of atypia or malignant change. Patient was assured about the benign nature of lump. Follow up of 6 months has shown her to be disease and symptom free.

Discussion

Lipoma in the breast is a slow growing benign neoplasm of mature fat cells. It can be seen in almost all organs of the body and in all age groups. Most commonly it is seen in subcutaneous tissue and gastrointestinal tract. However, lipoma in breast is not commonly seen and in an elderly female it

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Fig. 1 : Intraoperative image of breast lipoma during excision.

can closely mimic breast malignancy. Most of the clinically diagnosed breast lipomas lack a true capsule and are only collection of supporting fatty tissues of the breast.²⁻⁴ Fine needle aspiration cytology (FNAC) only shows fat cells without any comment on capsular status. Various investigations also do not differentiate between breast lipoma and breast carcinoma.^{4,5} Mammography and ultrasound are also less sensitive in detecting a breast lipoma. FNAC may be confusing in presence of pleomorphic lipoma or spindle cell lipoma and may create diagnostic confusion.^{6,7} Hence a definitive conclusion cannot be drawn on the basis of these investigations. One study showed that out of 108 patients of clinically diagnosed breast lipomas 25% were found to be incorrect. Moreover, only 11.4% patients fulfilled the triple diagnostic criteria.¹ Therefore, very few breast lipomas can be

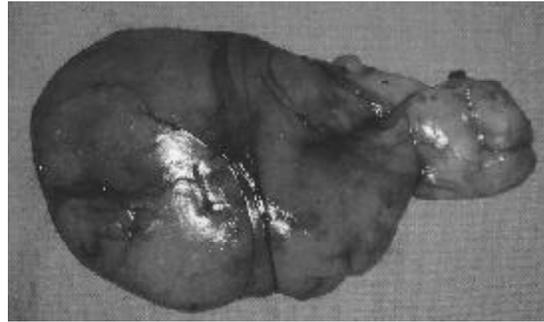


Fig. 2 : Excised specimen of breast lipoma.

diagnosed on basis of triple diagnostic criteria making tumour excision and histopathological diagnosis mandatory in an elderly female.¹ In our case, the patient underwent complete surgical excision of mass and the mass was subjected to histopathological examination. Histopathological study confirmed the diagnosis as breast lipoma. This case demonstrates that a breast lipoma in an elderly female can mimic as breast carcinoma on presentation.

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