Rheumato-Geriatric Day

"Phlebitis-Like" Syndrome in Elderly Patient with Rheumatoid Arthritis

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: The term "phlebitis-like" syndrome or pseudothrombophlebitis represents a real diagnostic challenge for the clinician, especially in the elderly subject. It may be secondary to a popliteal cyst, focal myositis, or a disrupted popliteal aneurysm in the calf.

We present a case of PTP secondary to a broken Baker's cyst in an elderly patient with rheumatoid arthritis (RA).

Observations: A 60-year-old patient, followed for peripheral hypothyroidism related to Hashimoto's thyroiditis and a well-balanced seropositive RA under DMARD and hormone replacement therapy. She was referred urgently for suspicion of lower limb phlebitis: acute pain with swelling of the right calf with increased calf perimeter, local inflammatory signs and a positive Homans sign. Doppler ultrasound showed no thrombophlebitis but objectified a right popliteal cyst ruptured in the calf. Under oral and topical anti-inflammatory treatment, the evolution was favorable.

Discussion and conclusion: The popliteal cyst or Baker's cyst is a fairly common complication of RA but often remains under-diagnosed clinically: in the Andonopoulos AP et al series, his systematic ultrasound search in a PR population was positive in 47.5% of cases; it was diagnosed clinically only in less than half of cases (43%). Its rupture at the level of the calf gives the similar clinical picture of phlebitis of the lower limb or pseudothrombophlebitis.

The ruptured Baker cyst deserves to be known and evoked as possible diagnosis of a large acute leg simulating phlebitis, especially in aged person with RA, because the therapeutic implications are totally different.