Natural HGH has been withdrawn in both UK and USA because of its association with Creutzfeld-Jacob disease, but association with astrocytoma has not previously been described.


References

Skull base chondroma presenting in pregnancy

Sir: We present the case of a patient with multiple chondromatosis and rapidly evolving cranial nerve palsies during two successive pregnancies. No skull lesion had been apparent previously. Symptomatic cure followed partial excision of a chondroma arising from the skull base. A subsequent pregnancy proceeded uneventfully to term.

A 29 year old woman complained of left facial numbness and pain after 5 weeks amenorrhoea. Three weeks later she developed a partial left ptosis which became complete after another week.

At the age of 14 she had noticed swellings on the hands and feet, several of which required curettage for cosmetic reasons or because of local trauma. These were benign enchondromata. Asymptomatic lesions were also apparent radiologically in the limbs and in several ribs. Her first pregnancy at the age of 21 yr had been complicated by pre-eclampsia but ended in normal delivery of a healthy baby and the second pregnancy had been terminated “therapeutically” in the first trimester. Fifteen months before this admission she had complained of numbness of the left side of her face after 8 weeks amenorrhoea; this resolved following a spontaneous abortion. No neurological symptoms occurred during her normal menstrual cycle.

Examination revealed scars, localised hard swellings over several long bones and deformity of the left forearm. There was a complete left third nerve palsy and she had reduced sensation in the ophthalmic territory of the left trigeminal nerve, a reduced corneal reflex, anaesthesia of the two lower divisions and an ipsilateral trigeminal motor palsy. Skull radiographs, CT scan and carotid angiography revealed an enlarged foramen ovale, irregularity of the petrous bone, expansion of the clivus and dorsum sellae, soft tissue mass in the posterior nasopharynx and narrowing and displacement of the internal carotid artery.

Despite the well established benign nature of the limb lesions urgent exploration of the cranial lesion was felt to be indicated as the rapid presentation and progression raised the possibility of malignancy. The pregnancy was terminated on medical advice (with some reduction in facial pain) and one week later craniotomy was performed, revealing a pinkish-grey tumour extending into the cavernous sinus and through which the third, fourth, fifth and sixth cranial nerves passed. An extensive internal decompression of the partly mucinous tumour was undertaken. Histology confirmed a benign chondroma with no features of malignancy. There was cellular enlargement and a swollen matrix.

Partial resolution of the third nerve palsy occurred within 3 days and there was full return of sensation in the two lower trigeminal divisions by one week. Further recovery took place and after 9 months the only residual complaint was of infrequent paraesthesiae of the left cheek without any abnormal signs. One year later she expressed a wish to become pregnant again, provoking mixed reactions from her medical advisors.

The consensus was in favour of pregnancy before a normal increase in cell numbers and residual tumour bulk could again cause symptoms. Since that time she had an uncomplicated pregnancy, delivering a healthy baby.

Chondromata of the skull are uncommon. Arising from synchondroses, they are slow growing, often solitary and usually benign. An increased tendency to undergo malignant change had been suggested when they occur in patients with multiple chondromatosis (Ollier’s disease, dyschondroplasia). Lesions in the skull base are usually present with progressive cranial nerve palsies, while those in the vault may act as mass lesions. They are said to be more common in females. The rapid progression of our patient’s symptoms was, as we believe, due to tumour enlargement under the influences of pregnancy. This is an established feature of intracranial tumours and most histological types can behave in this way, the commonest being astrocytoma, meningioma and neurofibroma.

The mechanism causing rapid enlargement of tumours in pregnancy is the subject of debate. Although the physiological...