

THUMB TROUBLE: CASE OF GLOMUS TUMOUR MISTAKENLY TREATED AS THE MORE COMMON CARPAL TUNNEL SYNDROME AND DE QUERVAIN'S TENOSYNOVITIS

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Introduction: Glomus tumour is a rare, benign vascular tumour arising from the glomus body. Symptoms often mimic other common pathologies of the fingers, masking the actual underlying, more debilitating pathology. This is a case of late diagnosis of thumb subungual glomus tumour, who presented with signs and symptoms similar to carpal tunnel syndrome and De Quervain's tenosynovitis, directing the physician towards a non-successful treatment and persistent symptoms.

Discussion: 40-year-old woman presented with pain of the left thumb and wrist for 5 years. Pain described as sharp, even at the slightest pressure, arising from the nailbed and radiates along the dorsum thumb to the wrist. The pain was also aggravated during a cold shower. On examination, there was a small discolouration of the base of the nailbed, which was very tender on pressure. There was significant wasting of thenar muscle with weak thumb opposition. Tinel, Phalen and Durkan test was positive. Finkelstein test was also falsely positive. The more specific Love's test and Hildreth's sign was positive. She previously had steroid injection done to her 1st dorsal compartment and underwent multiple counts of physiotherapy for her presumed carpal tunnel syndrome and De Quervain's tenosynovitis but to no avail. Due to the distinct signs and symptoms, with mixed physical findings, she was sent for confirmatory diagnosis, which includes nerve conduction study, ultrasound of the first dorsal compartment, both of which came back normal. Subsequent MRI then revealed the glomus tumour, measuring 4mmx3mm. Excision of tumour was performed, and at subsequent follow up she was free of pain.

Conclusion: Although rare, presentations of glomus tumour of the thumb may mimic those of carpal tunnel syndrome and De Quervain' tenosynovitis. A careful description of pain and examination findings is crucial in differentiating these pathologies. Nevertheless, glomus tumour should be considered in chronic unresolved thumb pain.