

THE MIMICKER, TUBERCULOSIS KNEE!

Mah Yew Leng¹, Andrew Lim Yu In¹, Boon Huck Wee¹, Joanne Ngim¹

¹Hospital Pulau Pinang

Introduction: Extrapulmonary TB is not uncommon, particularly musculoskeletal TB, which has accounted up to 19% of the cases. However, owing to its atypical presentation, this condition can be very easily misdiagnosed.

Discussion: We are reporting a case of a 58 years old Chinese female, who had been diagnosed with left knee rheumatoid arthritis on long term steroid treatment. She presented to us with 4 months history of left knee pain and swelling. Medical attention was sought from general practitioners. She was treated as osteoarthritis, was given multiple intra-articular steroids and hyaluronic acid injections. Knee joint aspiration and knee fluid sampling had never been done. Her symptoms worsened overtime. Eventually, she was unable to ambulate due to severe pain and swelling. Upon examination, noted swelling 15cm x 15cm over medial aspect of left knee, surrounding skin appeared erythematous. The left knee was very tender, range of movement was very limited. MRI left knee was performed, showing marked diffuse articular cartilage defect and joint space narrowing. Patient was subsequently posted for arthrotomy washout. Intra-operatively, 200cc of turbid seropurulent discharge with sediments drained. Noted severe destructions of the articular cartilages, which may be seen in inflammatory joint disease, however, it's too severe to be degenerative causes. TB infection was suspected, multiple samples sent intra-operatively. AFB Direct-smear turned up to be positive. Patient was subsequently started with anti-TB Medications. Significant improvement seen post initiation of anti-TB Medications. The patient was able to ambulate with walking frame after 2 weeks of anti-TB medications. Pain and swelling reduced dramatically.

Conclusion: High index of suspicion should be arisen in patients who complain of chronic knee pain and swelling, as TB knee may mimic manifestations of rheumatoid arthritis and osteoarthritis, which are very commonly misdiagnosed and overlooked by general practitioners.