A Case Report: Thoracic Outlet Syndrome Secondary to Pancoast Tumour Masquerading as Cervical Spondylotic Myelopathy

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INTRODUCTION:

Thoracic outlet syndrome is a neurovascular disorder resulting from compression of brachial plexus or subclavian vessels in between neck and axilla. One of its most insidious cause is Pancoast tumour, a primary lung cancer arises in lung apex which lacks typical symptoms of lung cancer. Symptoms only develop when it compresses surrounding structures such as brachial plexus, causing pain over neck and arm, numbness or weakness of upper limb, and could mimick cervical spondylotic myelopathy.

REPORT:

This 78-year old gentleman was referred from Klinik Kesihatan for cervical spondylotic myelopathy and was given orthopaedic clinic appointment after 1 month. He presented with neck pain, numbness and weakness of left upper limb for 6 months with eventual paralysis of left upper limb for 1 month. Patient is of normal built,with no gait instability or spine tenderness. Over left upper limb, tone was flaccid, reflex absent, power of MRC Grade 1, sensation reduced over C5- T1 with absence of Hoffmann's sign and inverted brachioradialis reflex. X-ray cervical shows degenerative changes, reduced disc space over C5/C6 and consolidation over apex of left lung. Chest x-ray further reveals Pancoast tumour. Patient was given outpatient MRI Left Brachial Plexus and referred to medical team. CT TAP revealed Pancoast tumour of stage T3N1M0 (Stage 3A). Lung biopsy shows adenocarcinoma. However, patient succumbed to his disease within 2 months of his cancer diagnosis.

CONCLUSION:

Patients with unilateral upper limb weakness should not be passed off as simply having an orthopaedic-related pathology such as cervical spondylotic myelopathy or peripheral nerve entrapment. In the case of thoracic outlet syndrome secondary to Pancoast tumour, X-ray cervical AP view including shoulder of the affected side can reveal consolidation over apical lung field and should not be overlooked, as it would lead to misdiagnosis, delay in treatment and hence affecting patient's prognosis.

REFERENCE:

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