Right atrial mass complicating aortic endocarditis

Masse atriale droite compliquant une endocardite aortique

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Received 10 April 2009; received in revised form 20 April 2009; accepted 21 April 2009
Available online 6 September 2009

A 37-year-old Djiboutian man presented to hospital with rheumatic aortic stenosis (aortic valve area 0.7 cm²/m²). The patient became symptomatic with dyspnoea and fever. The aortic valve area was unchanged with mild aortic regurgitation. Transthoracic echocardiography revealed a pediculated round mass (25 × 20 mm) floating inside the right atrium (Fig. 1, panel A). Three successive blood cultures were positive for *Streptococcus viridans*, with a dental entry site. Infective endocarditis was confirmed on transoesophageal echocardiography. A posterior aortic ring abscess (17 × 12 mm) ruptured into the right atrium creating an aortic-right atrial fistula and causing a highly mobile vegetative mass in the right atrium (Fig. 1, panel B) with no valvular vegetation. The patient had multiple organ failure and acute respiratory distress syndrome, which was probably due to multiple pulmonary emboli. There were no other clinical signs of septic embolus. There are no cardiovascular surgical centres in the Horn of Africa, and the patient died a few days after the diagnosis despite intensive care.

Aortic ring abscess is a frequent complication of infective endocarditis. Aorto-cavitary fistula is less frequent, representing less than 2% of cases of native aortic valve endocarditis. The report of a patient with a right atrial mass complicating an aortic ring abscess with fistula is exceptional. The diagnosis of a cardiac tumour could be excluded because the mass was absent 4 months earlier (evidenced on a previous echocardiographic evaluation). This echo-dense mass, mimicking a thrombus, was certainly

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Figure 1. Panel A. Transthoracic echocardiography demonstrating right atrial mass (left) confirmed on transesophageal echocardiography (right).
Panel B. Transesophageal echocardiography (Colour Doppler mode) demonstrating right atrial mass (small arrow) and aortic right atrial fistula (large arrow).
Ao: aortic ring; LA: left atrium; LV: left ventricle; RA: right atrium; RV: right ventricle.

an infected thrombotic vegetation, and the lack of surgical facilities led to the patient’s death.

Conflict of interests

None declared.

Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data associated with this article can be found, in the online version, at doi:10.1016/j.acvd.2009.04.014.