“Digital Ischemia as a Paraneoplastic Manifestation of Lung Cancer” Clinical Image

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A 70-year-old man was transferred to the emergency vascular department of our hospital with atypical diffuse necrotic lesions below the knees and gangrene in both feet (Pictures 1, 2). The patient did not complain of resting pain. His past medical history, other than an excessive nicotine abuse was negative. The man was not diabetic; he described that the lesions had started to appear approximately 15 days previously. He had not applied any kind of chemical or pharmaceutical ointment. Also he denied any burn, exposure to heating radiator or the use of kind of drug toxicant. He did not complain for resting pain but he mentioned weakness and anorexia for the previous 3 months. Clinical examination revealed normal pulses in femoral and popliteal arteries in both legs, while Doppler examination revealed the presence of flow in tibial arteries (tibial anterior and posterior) and the absence of a sign in digital arteries. Laboratory examination showed severe anemia and an altered biochemical profile indicating muscle lysis, while a chest radiograph revealed a huge mass in the right lung compatible with a neoplasma. The diagnosis of lung cancer was confirmed by a computed tomography. The subsequent serological examination was negative. The man died after 5 days due to a combination of pulmonary insufficiency and sepsis.

In the brief description of this case we emphasize an unusual and rare manifestation of lung cancer. The term “paraneoplastic syndrome” has been used to describe a clinical manifestation associated with a malignant neoplasm, which is not a direct consequence of invasive tumor growth. Digital ischemia with gangrene has been observed as a paraneoplastic manifestation associated with various malignant tumors, especially adenocarcinomas (1-4). The precise mechanism of this phenomenon has not been completely clarified. The presence of digital ischemia in an elderly patient with cancer should always raise clinical suspicion of a paraneoplastic phenomenon.
References


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