A Case of Tonsillar Metastasis from Small Cell Lung Cancer

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Metastasis of a tumor to the tonsil is a rare event. We report herein on a case of tonsillar metastasis from small cell lung cancer. A 70-year-old woman had been in our hospital for treatment of her lung cancer. She complained of pharyngalgia, and was referred to our division for examination. The right palatine tonsil was swelling, rubescent and covered with pus plugs. She was treated with antibiotics on the basis of having acute tonsillitis. The swollen right palatine tonsil reduced in size for a while, but enlarged again, and was partially ulcerated. She was afraid to undergo any biopsy, so a right tonsillectomy was done under general anesthesia. The histopathological examination resulted in the diagnosis of a metastatic tonsillar tumor from lung cancer (small cell carcinoma). Intravenous chemotherapy was performed, but ineffective. She died due to progression of the primary lesion and other metastasizing lesions (right adrenal gland, and abdominal lymph nodes) 5 months after the diagnosis of tonsillar metastasis.

Keywords : tonsillar metastasis, small cell carcinoma, chemotherapy

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Chest-X ray
Chest-X ray shows a mass shadow in the right lower lung field.

Macroscopic view of the right palatine tonsil: The right palatine tonsil is swollen.
△ : the right palatine tonsil ◇ : the palatine uvula

Neck CT
Neck CT shows the swelling of the right palatine tonsil (an arrow).

Histological findings (H.E. stain, ×400.)
Histological findings of the right palatine tonsil show small cell carcinoma, i.e., metastasis from lung cancer.