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https://doi.org/10.15017/18474

出版情報:福岡醫學雜誌. 101 (7), pp.142-147, 2010-07-25. 福岡医学会 バージョン: 権利関係:

## A Case of Giant Cell Glioblastoma : A Mimicker of a Cerebral Metastasis

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**Abstract** We report a rare case of giant cell glioblastoma that was difficult to distinguish from cerebral metastasis. The MRI finding was a ring-enhancing well-circumscribed solitary brain tumor that was very similar to cerebral metastasis. Even when MRI results were considered together with the findings by magnet resonance spectroscopy and perfusion-weighted MRI, it was hard to distinguish between giant cell glioblastoma and cerebral metastasis before surgery. When we find a solitary ring-enhancing intracranial mass with little tendency of invasion, we need to consider the possibility of giant cell GBM as a differential diagnosis.

Key words : giant cell glioblastoma, solitary metastasis, MRI, perfusion-weighted imaging, MR spectroscopy

#### Introduction

Glioblastoma (GBM) is the common primary brain tumor in adults, constituting 50–55% of gliomas and 25% of all intraparenchymal primary brain tumors<sup>1)</sup>. Giant cell GBM is a subtype of GBM. It is pathologically characterized by numerous multinucleated giant cells and small cells mixed in high density, and bizarre nuclei with rich chromatin are found in giant cells<sup>2)</sup>. To the best of our knowledge, there are very few reports regarding MRI findings of giant cell GBM. Here we report a case of giant cell GBM that was difficult to distinguish from cerebral metastasis by MRI.

#### **Case report**

A 64-year-old female was referred to the neurosurgical unit of our hospital with apraxia as her chief complaint. Neurological examination could not point out any obvious abnormality. The contrast-enhanced CT images of the head showed a ring-enhancing well-circumscribed solitary tumor in the left parietal lobe, with a low density region found around it. MRI was performed by a 3T unit (Achieva Quasar Dual, Philips Medical Systems, Best, The Netherlands) with an 8-channel head array coil. The T1-weighted image showed a well-circumscribed hypointense mass lesion in the left parietal lobe (Fig. 1a). The T2-weighted image showed a heterogeneous hyperinetense mass lesion with a T2-prolongation in the surrounding white matter (Fig. 1b). Contrast-enhanced T1-weghted images showed a ring-like contrast enhancement in the mass lesion (Fig. 1c).

The patient also underwent perfusion-weighted MRI and multi-voxel proton MR spectroscopy (MRS). For perfusion-weighted imaging, a series of T2\*-weighted gradient-echo echo-planar images (TR/TE/flip angle = 2069 msec/60 msec/ 90°) were obtained during the first pass of a bolus of gadopentetate dimeglumine (Magnevist, Berlex Laboratories, Wayne, NJ, USA) at a dose of 0.1 mmol per kilogram of body weight. Mapping of the relative cerebral blood volume (rCBV) was performed using Perfusion Mismatch Analyzer (ASIST-Japan, http://asist.umin.jp/). Relative

MRI of giant cell glioblastoma



regional CBV (rrCBV) was obtained in the peritumoral T2-prolonged region as well as in the enhancing tumor by a region-of interest (ROI) analysis as the rCBV in a probed region divided by that within the normal white matter in the contra-lesional hemisphere. The rrCBV within the peritumoral area ranged from 0.33 to 0.69, while the maximum rrCBV within the enhancing tumor was 1.21. Thus there was no abnormal elevation of rCBV in the peritumoral region (Fig. 2).

MRS (TR/TE = 2000 msec/288 msec, voxel size =  $13 \times 13 \times 15 \text{ mm}^3$ ) was performed after the contrast agent administration. The section was positioned to include the enhancing tumor, peritumoral region, and normal contralateral brain parenchyma (Fig. 3a). In visual inspection

of the spectra, there was no noticeable increase in choline peak within the enhancing tumor in comparison with normal brain parenchyma, while diminished N-acetylaspartate peaks and increased lactate/lipid peaks were observed (Fig. 3b). The maximum choline/creatine ratio (Cho/ Cre) within the tumor was 6.20. The Cho/Cre in the peritumoral region ranged from 0.26 to 1.23, demonstrating no abnormal increase. On 18F-fluorodeoxy glucose-positron emission tomography (FDG-PET), the tumor showed a ring-like high uptake (SUVmax = 18.0), suggesting a malignant tumor with the central necrosis (Fig. 4). Based on the test results just described, while we could not exclude the possibility of GBM, we most suspected cerebral metastasis, although screening body CT and FDG-PET revealed no



Fig. 2 Regional cerebral blood volume (rCBV) map obtained from perfusion-weighted MRI data. Note that there is no abnormal elevation of rCBV in the peritumoral region.

extracranical malignant lesion.

At surgical removal, the back of the tumor was hard and well-circumscribed so that it was detached easily from the surrounding brain tissue. Its front was soft and the boundary between the tumor and the surrounding brain tissue was not clear. While it was extirpated as a block, excision was added at the same time as it was determined as GBM upon rapid pathological diagnosis, and as its front had a positive margin.

The pathological finding showed that numerous multinucleated giant cells and small cells were mixed at high density, and there were bizarre nuclei with rich chromatin in the giant cells (Fig. 5). The tumor cells were diffusely positive for glial fibrillary acidic protein (GFAP), and the MIB1 index was 58.4 %. The histological diagnosis was giant cell GBM.

After the operation, the patient underwent the chemotherapy with temozolomide and radiotherapy. There has been no clinical evidence of recurrence for one year.

#### Discussion

Among malignant gliomas, there are cases seen from time to time that have many giant cells with a mysterious type of nucleus. This histology has



Fig. 3 Multi-voxel proton MR spectroscopy.

- (a) The section includes the normal brain parenchyma in the contra-lesional hemisphere as well as the enhancing tumor and peritumoral region.
- (b) Spectra over the probed area. Note that there is no obvious elevation in choline peaks in the region of the enhancing tumor. Also note that no elevation of choline/creatine ratio is observed in the peritumoral region.

been called monstrocellular sarcoma and giant cell GBM [3] etc. There is no consensus about whether this giant cell is of glioma origin or mesenchymal origin. Historically, since Meyer<sup>4)</sup> and others called this condition giant cell GBM in their of 3 cases of giant cells with mysterious nuclei, with tumor characteristics similar to those of glioblastoma multiforme such as necrosis and hemorrhage, the giant cell has been called in various names depending on whether it is of glioma origin or sarcoma origin. However, this condition is roughly classified into either giant cell GBM<sup>3</sup>, regarded by Russel et al. as glioma



Fig. 4 18F-fluorodeoxy glucose-positron emission tomography. The tumor shows a ring-like high uptake (SUVmax = 18.0), suggesting a malignant tumor with the central necrosis.



Fig. 5 Pathological finding of the tumor. Specimen (H and E) shows diffuse, cellular proliferation of highly anaplastic, epithelioid-to-spindle glioma cells exhibiting hyperchromatic, pleomorphic nuclei, associated with multinucleated giant cells. The largest tumor cell is 160 micrometers in diameter.

origin, or monstrocellular sarcoma<sup>5)</sup>, regarded as being of sarcoma origin.

Microscopically, the characteristic feature of this giant cell is that its cytoplasm has fibers of 80 angstroms in diameter clustered around the nucleus<sup>6)</sup>. Because GFAP, which is immunologically a specific tumor marker of astrocytes, can be found markedly in this giant cell's cytoplasm and fiber, the theory that this type of cell is of glioma origin has become more prevalent<sup>7)8)</sup>.

The clinical features of giant cell GBM include an age of onset from 18 to 75 years old and a survival time that varies from case to case, with some cases of much longer survival documented, compared with ordinary GBM<sup>9</sup>. While according to WHO classification the giant cell GBM is described as well circumscribed, there are very few reports of concrete MRI findings available.

In this particular case, the tumor was apparently well circumscribed on conventional MRI (Fig. 1), which is not typical of a high-grade glioma. In addition to ordinary examinations, perfusion-weighted MRI and MRS were added as pre-operation tests. This was because there is a report<sup>10)</sup> that increases of rCBV and Cho/Cre in the T2-prolonged region around the enhancing tumor reflect microscopic invasion of GBM, and such findings are useful as indicators for distinguishing GBM from solitary brain metastasis. In perfusion-weighted MRI, the rrCVB value in the peritumoral region was considered closer to the value indicating brain metastasis than that indicating a high-grade glioma (Fig. 2). Also by MRS, no elevation of Cho/Cre in the circumference of the tumor was found (Fig. 3). Based on these results, we made a pre-operation diagnosis of a suspected solitary brain metastasis. While the finding during surgery showed invasion to the surrounding cerebral parenchyma, the images had suggested very little invasion tendency.

We have reported a case of giant cell GBM that was hard to distinguish from brain metastasis even by using perfusion-weighted MRI and MRS. We believe that when we find a solitary ring-enhancing intracranial mass with little tendency of invasion, we need to consider the possibility of giant cell GBM as a differential diagnosis.

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(Received for publication May 26, 2010)

(和文抄録)

### 転移性脳腫瘍との鑑別が困難であった巨細胞膠芽腫の一例

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緒言:画像所見上,転移性脳腫瘍との鑑別が困難であった巨細胞膠芽腫の症例を報告する. 症例:失行を主訴とする 64歳の女性が当院脳外科に紹介された.CT および MRI で左頭頂葉にリ ング状増強を示す境界明瞭な腫瘤がみとめられた.MRI 灌流画像では,増強腫瘤周囲の T2 延長域 において局所血液量の増加をみとめず,MR スペクトロスコピーでは,同部にコリン/クレアチン 比の増加をみとめなかった.これらの画像所見から,転移性腫瘍が疑われた.開頭腫瘍摘出術が行 われ,病理組織学的に巨細胞膠芽腫と診断された.

考察:巨細胞膠芽腫は膠芽腫の一亜型であるが、その画像診断所見についての報告は少ない.本症 例では増強腫瘤の境界が明瞭だったことに加え、増強腫瘤周囲のT2延長域において、局所血液量 の増加やコリン/クレアチン比の増加などの腫瘍の浸潤を示唆する所見がみられなかったことから、 転移性脳腫瘍との鑑別が困難であった.

結語:画像上浸潤傾向に乏しいリング状増強腫瘤がみとめられた場合,巨細胞膠芽腫は鑑別診断として考慮すべきである.