Fetus in fetu

Maher M. Al Zaiem, CU, Abdel Hadi F. Algarni, FACHARZT.

ABSTRACT

Fetus in fetu is an extremely uncommon cause of abdominal mass in the neonate. A case of retroperitoneal fetus in fetu in a 2 week old boy is reported, the excised mass containing a round mass, covered by hair, containing brain tissue; 2 feet and 2 arms; a cavity containing a loop of intestine of 15 centimeters length, small penis and testis.

Keywords: Fetus in fetu, teratoma.
brain tissue, nerve, intestine (all layers were present) skin, lung tissue, tissue of penis and testes. The patient did well and was discharged on the 10th postoperative day.

Discussion.  Fetus in fetu is a very rare cause of abdominal mass. It arises most likely from inclusion of monozygotic diamniotic twin. Nicholson in 1934 and Willis 1935 to 1948 insisted that the absence of a vertebral column in a teratoma is a proof that these tumors had not developed in a manner similar to a fetus, they could not have passed through the primitive streak stage which endows the developing organism with its fundamental vertebral pattern. They believed that if a tumor proves to have this vertebral pattern then its etiology would differ from that of teratoma. Ouimet and Russo, Eng et al, and Simpson have described their cases as fetus in fetu instead of teratoma because of the presence of organ-like structures even in the absence of vertebral axis.

The present case meets all the accepted criteria of fetus in fetu of the well documented cases i.e. the vertebral bodies, the upper and lower limbs, other organs such as; penis, testes, and a well developed intestine. Lord in 1956 reviewed the world literature and found 31 cases reported before 1900 and 11 cases after, only 4 of those were intraabdominal. Since that time, sporadic cases of fetus in fetu in different parts of the world have been reported. An equal number have been reported since then.

Finally it is important to differentiate between teratoma and fetus in fetu. The first is potentially malignant, while the second is benign but may cause serious complications by pressure caused by continuous growing if it is left untreated.

References