Choroid Melanoma Metastasis to Lumbar Spine: A Case Report

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INTRODUCTION

Intraocular melanomas are the most common primary ocular malignancy in adults, but accounts for 5% of all malignant melanomas. Approximately 95% of melanoma around the eye is found in the uvea, and choroid melanoma is the most common primary ocular malignancy in adults. In many cases, the predominant site of metastatic disease for patients with choroid melanoma is the liver. Spinal/vertebral metastasis is an infrequent clinical entity. Spinal metastasis of choroid malignant melanoma has been reported only in 3 previous cases. However, previous reports have discussed thoracic spine metastasis. To our knowledge, this is the first report of the lumbar spine as the main lesion location without thoracic or cervical spine symptoms.

CASE REPORT

A 57-year-old woman visited our hospital with left flank pain and left anterior thigh and calf radiation pain. A lumbar spine magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) was showed that a heterogeneous enhancing ventral epidural mass compressed the dura posteriorly at L3 level and totally enhanced L3 vertebral body. To reduce pain, L3 laminectomy, left facetectomy, and partial tumor removal with posterior pedicle screw fixation were performed. On examination, the tumor was soft and black-colored. After the operation, histopathological assessment confirmed malignant melanoma. The patient had a history of choroid malignant melanoma of the right eye diagnosed 8 years previously. The patient underwent treatment at another hospital and achieved complete remission after 5 years. As follow-up was not performed, the metastasis was not detected earlier. To our knowledge, this is the first report of the lumbar spine as the main lesion location without thoracic or cervical spine symptoms.

Key Words: Choroid; Lumbar vertebrae; Melanoma; Neoplasm metastasis

Fig. 1. Preoperative gadolinium-enhanced magnetic resonance imaging. On images, strongly enhanced lumbar 3 vertebral body and posterior vertebral body soft tissue tumor is observed (A). Positron emission tomography-computed tomography showed liver, both ribs, clavicle, sternum, thorax-lumbar-sacrum spine, both pelvic bones, right humeral shaft, and left proximal femur was contrasted (B).
Table 1. Previous cases of spinal metastasis of choroid malignant melanoma

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex/Age</th>
<th>Origin</th>
<th>Duration from origin to meta development</th>
<th>Lab</th>
<th>Operation</th>
<th>Postoperation treatment</th>
<th>Prognosis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M/61</td>
<td>Left eye</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>LDH 1,716 IU/L</td>
<td>T10 laminectomy + tumor removal + pedicle fixation T8-9-10-11-12</td>
<td>Expired</td>
<td>Died a few weeks later</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F/54</td>
<td>Left eye</td>
<td>20 years</td>
<td>T9 laminectomy + tumor removal + pedicle fixation T7-18-10-11</td>
<td>RTx 15 days, CTx 1 cycle</td>
<td>Multiple metastases after 7 months</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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M: male; F: female; LDH: lactate dehydrogenase; T: thorax; RTx: radiotherapy; CTx: chemotherapy.

DISCUSSION

Choroid melanomas are the most common primary intraocular malignant tumor in adults. While choroid melanomas represent only 5% of all melanomas, they have a high rate of metastasis and poor response to treatment and account for about 13% of melanoma deaths. Because there is currently a limited amount of data on spinal metastasis from choroid melanomas, treatment for this is similar to that for all types of melanoma to spinal/vertebral metastasis.

Several studies have suggested that all therapies for uveal melanoma metastasis do not significantly impact overall survival and clinical improvement. In addition, there are a limited number of studies that address the role of surgery for spinal melanoma metastasis. There is no clear treatment for this reason, but there are studies as follows. One study reported that the number of melanoma metastatic sites is an important prognostic factor, and total tumor removal should be considered in healthy patients with spinal metastasis and surgically resectable tumors limited to one organ. Another study established that if the entire tumor cannot be removed, direct decompressive surgery plus postoperative RTx for all types of spinal metastasis is superior to radiotherapy alone. And surgical resection appears to preserve neurological function and can improve overall outcomes from melanoma metastatic to the spine.

Spinal metastasis of choroid malignant melanoma has been
reported in 3 cases, and specific treatment were presented in 2 cases. In 2 cases, tumor removal was performed, but the prognosis was poor (Table 1). One patient died several weeks after surgery, thus RTx and CTx were not performed. And another patient was performed RTx and CTx, but developed multiple metastasis after 7 months.

In our case, due to lack of follow-up, metastasis was not detected early and the patient had already multiple metastasis. Based on the results of previous studies, the tumors were not totally removed and decompressive tumor removal was performed. As in the previous 2 cases, L3 laminectomy, left facetectomy, and partial tumor removal with posterior pedicle screw fixation were performed. After surgery, RTx and CTx are being performed at other hospitals, and they have survived more than 1 year after surgery.

Metastasis caused by choroidal melanoma usually occurs within 5 years after diagnosis, but late metastasis is also a well-known complication. Shields et al, reported a case of orbital recurrence and liver metastasis 42 years after primary tumor enucleation. In ocular melanoma, the liver is the most common site of metastasis, and only one case of spine metastasis without liver metastasis has been reported.

In this case, if the metastasis had been identified earlier, it could have been limited to the liver and treated before metastasis to the spine.

**CONCLUSION**

We report a rare case of spinal metastasis of malignant choroidal melanoma. To our knowledge, this is the first report of the lumbar spine as the main lesion location without thoracic or cervical spine symptoms. Unfortunately, due to a lack of follow-up, the metastasis was not detected and treated early. Because melanoma is associated with recurrence, we suggest that future cases of melanoma, even cases that achieve remission, complete follow-up over the patient’s lifetime to detect and treat any recurrence.

**CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

No potential conflict of interest relevant to this article was reported.

**REFERENCES**