Ectopic thymus presenting as a right-side cervical mass in an infant

Farbod Nasserri • Farzin Eftekhari

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A 3-cm, soft, nontender and mobile mass was detected in the right mandibular angle of a 7-week-old boy. A right parapharyngeal mass (Fig. 1, *arrows*) was discovered on MR imaging, isointense to muscle on T1-W images and hyperintense on T2-W and post-contrast images. It was isointense to thymus (Fig. 1, *arrowheads*) on all sequences. A core-needle biopsy showed thymic tissue.

Ectopic cervical thymus is a rare cause of a neck mass during infancy [1]. During its descent a remnant of thymus remains along the thymopharyngeal duct. It is often located between the superior vena cava, the brachiocephalic vessels and the aorta; rarely, it is within the posterior mediastinum [2]. This resultant “mass” can be mistaken for a pathologic process.

The differential diagnosis of a lateral cervical mass in an infant includes various congenital cysts, lymphatic malformation, branchial cleft anomalies, lymphadenopathy, and inflammatory or neoplastic lesions.

Fig. 1 MR T2-W images (**a** coronal, **b** sagittal) of ectopic accessory thymus

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F. Nasserri (✉)
Department of Radiology, Baylor College of Medicine,
One Baylor Plaza,
Houston, TX 77030, USA
e-mail: nasserri@bcm.tmc.edu

F. Eftekhari
Department of Radiology,
University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center,
Houston, TX, USA