Acquired aortic nipple: a potential sign of deep venous obstruction

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A 17-year-old boy presented with gynecomastia and multiple firm testicular nodules. The boy underwent a right radical orchiectomy and chemotherapy for mixed germ cell testicular neoplasm. After treatment, follow-up chest radiographs and the scout image from a surveillance CT demonstrated a new finding of an aortic nipple (Fig. 1, *arrow*) that was not present on previous chest radiographs or CT scans. The CT revealed new thrombus within the left innominate vein with collateral

Fig. 1 Scout image from a chest CT

Fig. 2 Axial CT image

flow through the left superior intercostal vein (*arrows*) and paravertebral veins, which drained into the azygos vein (*arrowhead*) (Fig. 2). More cranial images (not shown) revealed a new left innominate vein thrombus.

The aortic nipple is a normal variant seen on chest radiographs in 1–9% of the population and is caused by a prominent left superior intercostal vein adjacent to the aortic arch [1]. However, it has also been reported in patients with congenital vascular abnormalities or obstruction of the superior vena cava (SVC), inferior vena cava (IVC) or innominate veins. Therefore, the development of a new aortic nipple on a chest radiograph should raise concern for innominate vein, SVC or IVC thrombosis [1, 2].

References

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