Cutaneous granulomatous reaction post intravesical BCG installation: a case report

Mahmood Farshchian, MD
Elahe Soltanieh, MD
Leila Mosavi, MD

Department of Dermatology, Sina (Farshchian) Hospital, Hamedan
University of Medical Sciences, Hamedan, Iran

Corresponding Author:
Elahe Soltanieh, MD
Department of Dermatology, Sina (Farshchian) Hospital, Hamedan
University of Medical Sciences, Hamedan, Iran
Email: soltaniehe@yahoo.com

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INTRODUCTION

Transitional cell carcinoma of the bladder is an aggressive and potentially fatal malignancy. In 1990, the US Food and Drug Administration approved the use of intravesical Bacillus Calmette-Guerin (BCG) for the treatment of superficial bladder cancer. BCG, which is an inactivated form of the Mycobacterium tuberculosis, induces both cell-mediated immunity and a variety of cytokines into the urine of patients with superficial transitional cell carcinoma. Through these immune responses, a significant reduction in the rate of disease progression and mortality rate is achieved with intravesical BCG therapy. In addition to the effectiveness against superficial tumors, BCG is the treatment of choice for carcinoma in situ of the bladder. BCG has been used to treat transitional cell carcinoma since 1976 and has been reported to eradicate disease in more than 70% of the patients with in situ and stage I disease. While the majority of patients tolerate intravesical BCG treatment well, a number of adverse reactions (e.g., fever, hematuria, dysuria, nausea, and malaise) have been reported. More serious complications include granulomatous prostatitis, pneumonitis, and hepatitis. The frequency of adverse effects was reported in a study of more than 1,200 patients who received this type of immunotherapy. The results revealed only an incidence rate of 2.9% for high fever (>39°C), 1.0% for major hematuria, 0.9% for granulomatous prostatitis, 0.7% for granulomatous pneumonitis/hepatitis, 0.5% for arthritis or arthralgia, 0.4% for epididymo-orchitis, 0.4% for life-threatening BCG sepsis, 0.3% for urethral obstruction, 0.2% for bladder contracture, 0.1% for renal abscess, and 0.1% for cytopenia. In addition, there have been reports of rare BCG complications such as mycotic aneurysms, glomerulonephritis, choroiditis, nephrogenic adenoma, suppurative lymphadenitis, cardiac toxicity, and musculoskeletal lesions. Nevertheless, BCG treatment is still considered to be a reasonably safe and effective cancer therapy.

Intravesical instillation of Bacillus Calmette-Guerin (BCG) has become an established adjuvant treatment for superficial bladder carcinoma. This treatment is associated with a relatively high rate of side effects which are mostly reversible spontaneously or can be treated symptomatically. Serious systemic side effects are less frequent. One of rare complications is granulomatous cutaneous reaction. We report a 50-year-old man with disseminated papules and plaques following intravesical BCG.

Keywords: Bacillus Calmette-Guerin, Cutaneous granulomatous, lupus vulgaris

BCG vaccination include localized or generalized tuberculids, lupus vulgaris, scrofuloderma and other non-specific reaction such as fever and local inflammation. We herein report a 50-year-old man with granulomatous lesions like lupus vulgaris secondary to intravesical BCG therapy for bladder cancer.

CASE REPORT

A 50-year-old man presented with a 6-month history of progressive developing cutaneous lesions following intravesical instillation of BCG. These lesions were neither painful nor itchy. According to his medical history, the patient underwent transurethral resection of a bladder tumor with a diagnosis of a grade II/IV noninvasive transitional-cell carcinoma 18 months ago and then received BCG maintenance instillation therapy. The first and second six BCG treatments were well tolerated. Six months prior to admission to the department of dermatology, the patient received his last BCG treatment (his 18th BCG treatment overall). A few days after the last instillation, he developed generalized multiple granulomatous cutaneous lesions. He had no cough, dyspnea, fever or weakness. His family history was negative for bladder carcinoma. On physical examination, multiple brown to reddish and slightly elevated papules and plaques were observed all over his body, ranging from 1-10mm in diameter (Figure 1). Laboratory examination revealed an elevated erythrocyte sedimentation rate but routine hematology, urinalysis, serum biochemistry, and serum lipid were normal. PPD was 10mm. Blood and urine cultures for Mycobacterium bovis were negative. Chest X-ray did not show any abnormalities. Biopsies of the lesion showed a skin tissue with an intact rather acanthotic epidermis. The dermis revealed severe lymphohistiocytic dermal infiltration including some granuloma formations with multinucleated giant cells rimmed by lymphocytes (H&E*10).

Figure 1. Multiple brown to reddish and slightly elevated papules and plaques

Figure 2. The dermis reveal some granuloma formations with multinucleated giant cells rimmed by lymphocytes (H&E*10).

Figure 3. Granuloma formations with multinucleated giant cells rimmed by lymphocytes (H&E*40)
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They reported the first case of cutaneous granuloma lesions in a patient receiving the above-mentioned treatment; similar to our case, her lesions were also disseminated. Then, Kureshi et al reported a 69-year-old man with ulceration of the penile base following intravesical BCG. Biopsy findings showed granulomatous inflammation with foci of dermal necrosis suggestive of a BCG–related granulomatous reaction.

Lupus vulgaris and other cutaneous granulomatous lesions are specific complications of BCG vaccination that may develop at the vaccination site, usually a few months after vaccination. Samuel et al, reported a child who received BCG vaccination in China and then developed lupus vulgaris shortly after adoption in the United States. Many other studies have reported lupus vulgaris following BCG vaccination. Distant cutaneous granulomas have been described after BCG immunotherapy for malignant melanoma.

Therefore, cutaneous granulomatous reactions (like lupus vulgaris) have been reported as a complication of BCG vaccination but they are reportedly rare after intravesical BCG. Our patient developed granulomatous lesions like lupus vulgaris following intravesicular treatment with BCG. To our knowledge, this represents the second report of a presumed cutaneous granulomatous reaction in a patient receiving intravesical BCG therapy for bladder carcinoma.

REFERENCES