Correspondence

To the Editors

Paediatric sparganosis

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Dear Editors,
Sparganosis is a rare parasitic infestation. It is sporadically reported in tropical countries. This infection is caused by a tapeworm and the main clinical presentation is a soft tissue mass[1]. The transmission of the disease usually results from eating frog or snake meat, drinking impure contaminated water or dermatological use of frog or snake meat poultice[1].

Southeast Asia is an endemic area for this disease. There are sporadic case reports. In Thailand, a tropical country in Indochina, the disease is also documented. The disease has been sporadically reported since 1943 and the most recent case report was in 2020[2]. Past studies show that the disease could affect patients of both sexes in a wide range of ages[3]. Adding to the past report from Thailand, the authors hereby re-evaluate updated data available on paediatric sparganosis from published literature. Up to now (2020), there had been about 69 cases of sparganosis in Thailand. Of those cases, there are at least 4 reports[4-7] on 5 cases (1 male and 4 females) of paediatric sparganosis. The ages of the patients ranged from 11 to 14 years (average 13 ±1.2 years). In these patients, risky behaviour, such as eating frog or snake meat, was identified in only 2 cases.

Three patients had a single ocular lesion and the presence of the parasite in the sclera. One patient presented with a subcutaneous mass in the abdomen and the last patient had a brain lesion and presented with seizures and sudden death. Surgical removal was done in all 4 non-fatal cases and the final diagnosis of sparganosis was by pathological examination. There were no disseminated lesions and no recurrences were reported. In the patient who died, the autopsy showed a haemorrhagic brain lesion and the parasite was identified.

In paediatrics, there are many parasitic infections but sparganosis is rarely mentioned. In the literature, there are less than 30 paediatric case reports of sparganosis[8-10]. Tissue parasitic lesions are mostly reported in the brain[8-9]. However, an unusual site, the scrotal sac, is also reported[10]. In the present series, the most common site was the eye. The age of the patient is usually the teenage years. However, the very young child can also get the disease[10]. In our report, most patients had no history of risky behaviour. It seems that the disease can exist in any patient with an unexplained mass lesion and there might or might not be a history of risky behaviour.

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***Pathum Sookaromdee[1]; Viroj Wiwanitkit[2]**
[1]*Private Academic Consultant, Bangkok Thailand*
[2]*Honorary Professor, Dr. DY Patil University, Pune, India*
**Correspondence:* pathumsook@gamil.com

https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8859-5322

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