

THE ROMANTIC DISEASE OF A FISH TRADER?

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INTRODUCTION:

Tuberculosis (TB), known as the romantic disease of poets and paupers in the Western continents, poses a burden to public health in Malaysia. TB involvement of knee joint is approximately 8% of extrapulmonary cases. We report a case of native knee joint TB in a previously well Chinese gentleman who presented with left knee pain for a year.

METHODS:

The 54 years old fish trader from Pangkor Island, underwent intra-articular injection which alleviated his pain momentarily. However, he started having sinus discharge adjacent to tibial tuberosity for five months before a wound debridement was performed. The wound did not heal which lead to referral to our center.

The right knee appeared swollen and warm, with 10° fixed flexion deformity. Contrasted MRI revealed communication between the sinus tract and knee joint with osteomyelitic changes

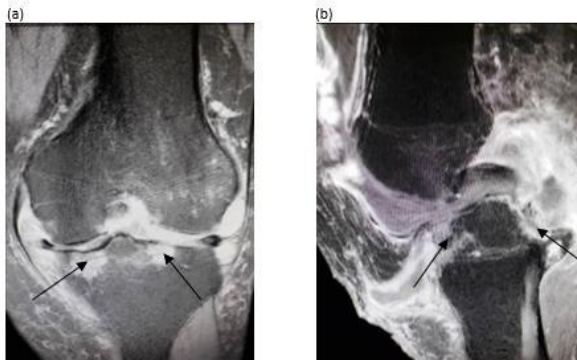


Figure 1. Contrasted T2-weighted MRI showing articular surface destruction (arrow) of bilateral tibial plateau and associated bony oedema

RESULTS:

A two-staged replacement arthroplasty was performed. Synovial tissue histopathological examination reported as inflamed tissue with distorted caseating and epithelioid granulomata with presence of typical Langerhans's giant cells. Tuberculous culture yielded positive. Patient was commenced on Akurit-4 for one year.



Figure 2: Patient's lower limb appearance after first stage replacement arthroplasty

Second stage arthroplasty was done 1 month after. Post-operatively, patient was able to achieve full extension and flexion to 90°.

DISCUSSIONS:

The rising rate of TB in Malaysia can be due to increasing number of immigrants. Our patient had prolonged exposures to foreign labors who live in squatters. Another concern is the timing of the second stage arthroplasty. Arthroplasty in a joint with current tuberculous infection is a controversial topic owing to the potential tuberculosis reactivation.

CONCLUSION:

A monoarticular arthritis that showed progressive worsening along with possible risk factors, TB arthritis should be ruled out. Diagnosis and treatment of TB arthritis remains a challenge owing to complexity and variability of clinical manifestation.

REFERENCES:

1. Vaughan K. Extrapulmonary tuberculosis: a forgotten entity? West Indian Medical Journal. 2005. 54(3): 202-206.