

Violation of the Right to Healthcare: A Case Report of Congenital Brain Tumor Mismanagement in Mali

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Abstract: Every human being has the right to receive the healthcare his condition may require. Congenital brain tumors are rare and their prognosis is poor. In spite of their poor prognosis, patients suffering from these tumors deserve to be treated even swiftly in order to optimize their chance to recover.

Keywords: Violation, rights to healthcare, congenital, brain tumors.

INTRODUCTION

Congenital brain tumors are rare, accounting for 0.5% to 4% of all pediatric brain tumors [1]. They are usually fatal [2]. Central nervous system neoplasms cause 5-20% of deaths in the fetal and neonatal period [3]. Tumors that present within 2 months after birth are considered congenital by Arnstein [4].

Here we present a case of mismanagement of angiosarcoma. Because of delay in surgery, the patient had expired after 3 weeks.

CASE REPORT

A full term three day-old female neonate admitted with proptosis. There was no pathologic

family history of similar complaint. The perinatal course was normal. The mother was a 33-year-old woman, gravida 5 para 5 with a normal vaginal delivery. On examination, the child had a unilateral proptosis of the left eye (Fig. 1). The proptosis was axial, non reducible and was accompanied by a huge chemosis hiding partially the eyeball. The computed tomography (CT scan) showed a hemispheric tumor extended to the orbital cavity (Fig. 2). The Radiologist concluded to an angiosarcoma. We referred the patient to a Neurosurgeon in order to undertake a rapid surgical procedure. Unfortunately, there was a delay, and the patient finally expired after three weeks.



Fig. 1: Photograph of the neonate with left eye proptosis (see arrow) three days after birth

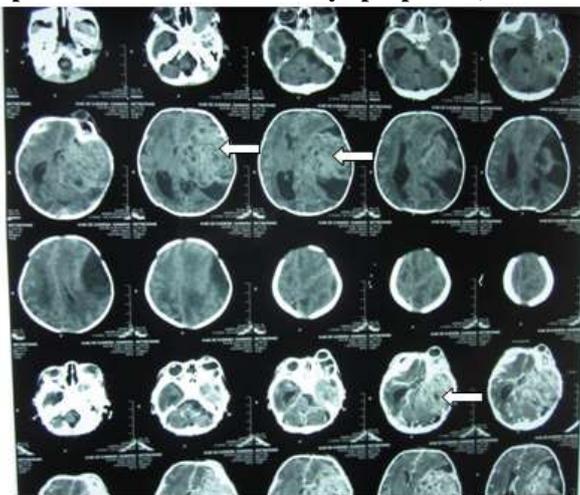


Fig. 2: CT scan displaying a huge brain tumor (see arrows)

DISCUSSION

Congenital tumors are sub-classified into three categories [5]

- Definitely congenital tumors- presenting or producing symptoms at birth;
- Probably congenital within the first week of life;
- Possibly congenital within the first months of life.

Sober *et al.* had stated that true congenital tumors are those diagnosed on delivery and in the first 2 weeks of life [6]. In our case, the tumor was a true congenital one. Indeed, after the delivery, the neonate presented a proptosis noticed by the gynecologist and was referred to our office two days later. Once the tumor was diagnosed by means of CT- scan, the patient was sent to a neurosurgeon who delayed the surgical procedure until the death occurred. The true nature of the tumor remained unknown because we did not have any chance to perform a biopsy for histopathological analysis.

The most common congenital brain tumor is teratoma that represents 26.6 to 48% [7, 8]. It is followed by astrocytoma, medulloblastoma and choroid plexus papilloma [9]. Congenital brain tumors of vascular origin, such as hemangiopericytoma are occasionally observed [6].

The follow up of the pregnancy was done by a gynecologist. Three ultrasonography scan were performed during the pregnancy; however, the tumor was not diagnosed despite its large size.

The ultrasonography can reveal a brain tumor in the fetus in the 3rd trimester of pregnancy, if the tumor has grown to a large size [10]. Though congenital brain tumors are highly lethal, something was to be

done for this neonate at least a palliative treatment. Large tumor size and rich vascularization often make radical resection of the tumor impossible. Localization associated with involvement of deep brain structures increases the postoperative complications rate, including the risk of intraoperative mortality [11]. Whatsoever the prognosis may be, every patient deserves to have a treatment ever curative or palliative. According to the Article 1383 of French civil law "Everyone is liable for the damage he causes not only by his intentional act, but also by his negligent conduct or by his imprudence" [12].

The management of this case by the Neurosurgeon can be qualified as "negligence" because he kept on postponing the operation until the death of the neonate. Caring for children and young people brings additional responsibilities for doctors.

Good medical practice involves placing the interests and wellbeing of the child or young person first [13].

CONCLUSION

Congenital brain tumors are uncommon and their prognosis is poor. Once the diagnosis is made either antenatally or after birth, an appropriate management is to be undertaken in order to respect the rights to healthcare every human being is entitled to have. Any negligence in providing the healthcare for these fragile neonates must end up with a lawsuit.

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