

Echocardiographic assessment of mediastinal tumor - a case report

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ABSTRACT

The mediastinum is the central area of the thoracic cavity which is divided into anterior, middle and posterior section. Mediastinal masses are usually asymptomatic. They can be detected accidentally in planned imaging studies. Echocardiography is safe, cheap, quick and non-invasive investigation, which can be useful in the diagnosis of this type of changes.

Key words: echocardiography, mediastinum, tumor

INTRODUCTION

Mediastinal masses could be both benign and malignant. They may have their origin in any tissue in the mediastinum or be a metastatic tumor. The most common mediastinal masses are cysts, thymoma and neurogenic tumors [1]. Thymoma, teratoma, lymphoma or goitre are typically found in anterior mediastinum [2]. The middle of mediastinum often contains cysts and neurogenic tumors are usually in posterior mediastinum [3]. Mediastinal tumors are mostly asymptomatic. Sometimes they cause non-characteristic symptoms, such as cough, wheezing during breathing, stridor, dysphagia, odynophagia, hoarseness, shortness of breath, pain and a feeling of pricking in the chest [4]. Systemic deficiencies may suggest tumor malignancy. Fever, night sweats and weight loss are characteristic in the course of lymphoma. Paraneoplastic syndromes - myasthenia gravis can be present in the case of thymoma [5]. The presence of a mediastinal tumor may cause the superior vena cava syndrome, which is an obstruction of vena cava [6]. Mediastinal tumors are usually discovered accidentally in plain chest X-rays or other more accurate imaging studies, such as CT or MRI [7].

Mediastinal anatomy and functional characterization of mediastinal masses can be accurately showed using echocardiography without nephrotoxic contrast agents and ionizing radiation. Despite this, the role of echocardiography in the detection and assessment of mediastinal tumours is insignificant [8].

CASE REPORT

A 75-year-old patient was admitted to the Department of Cardiology on March 5th, 2018. The patient was treated for dilated cardiomyopathy (NYHA III) and had CRT-D implanted in 2013. He was referred to the clinic due to repeated sound alarms of the device. The ICD check-up showed the exhaustion of the CRT battery. The patient was qualified for an urgent replacement and the procedure was performed without complications on March 13th, 2018. Due to the increased inflammatory parameters (CRP 164,2 on March 14th, 2018) further diagnostics was performed. There were no abnormalities in biochemical blood tests except for elevated CRP. Blood and urine cultures were negative. The chest X-ray showed fluid in the left pleural cavity, the shade over the fluid - the atelectal zone (Fig. 1). Echocardiographic examination revealed a large solid and cystic tumor (12 x 8 cm) in the anterior mediastinum (Fig. 2), which did not limit the function of the heart (EF 66%) and a large amount of fluid in the left pleura. The chest CT was performed. The examination showed an inconsistent, well-limited tumor (127 x 110 x 138 mm) with polycyclic outlines in the anterior mediastinum (Fig. 3). The contrast enhancement was heterogeneous.

The tumour was accidentally found in December 2017 during echocardiography. There was no surgical treatment proposal then.

The tumor shows signs of progression and the patient was qualified for a thoracic surgery.

DISCUSSION

Slowly growing mediastinal tumors may not give any typical symptoms. If symptoms are present they are usually uncharacteristic and can include cough, dyspnea, chest pain and fever. Anterior mediastinal tumours account for 50% of all mediastinal masses [9]. They can communicate with the pleural or pericardial space [10]. Echocardiography, which is a useful tool for diagnosing heart diseases, sometimes exposes pathological masses located in the mediastinum. These may be random discoveries in heart imaging. They require extended diagnostics and sometimes surgical treatment.

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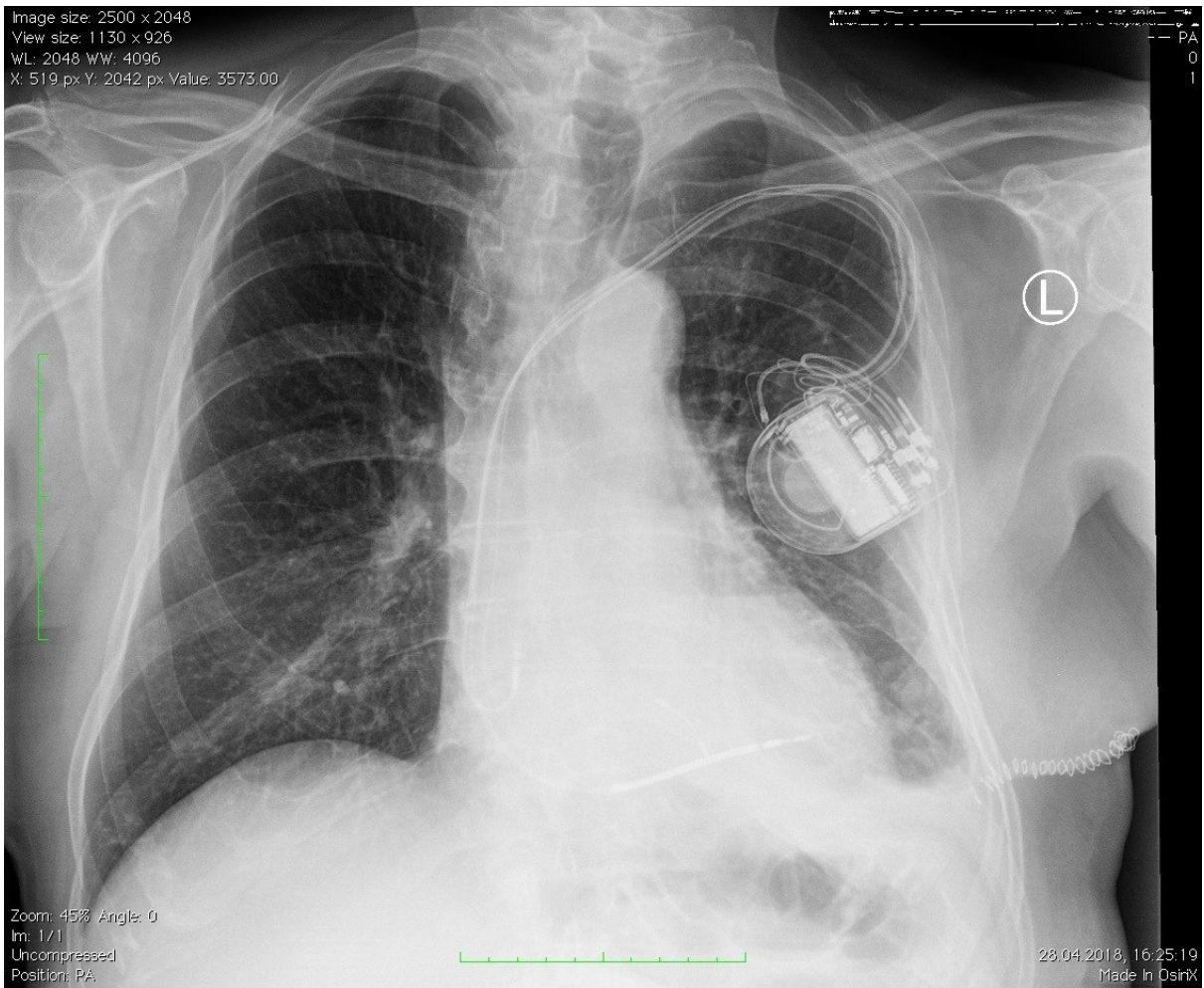


Fig. 1. Fluid in the left pleural cavity

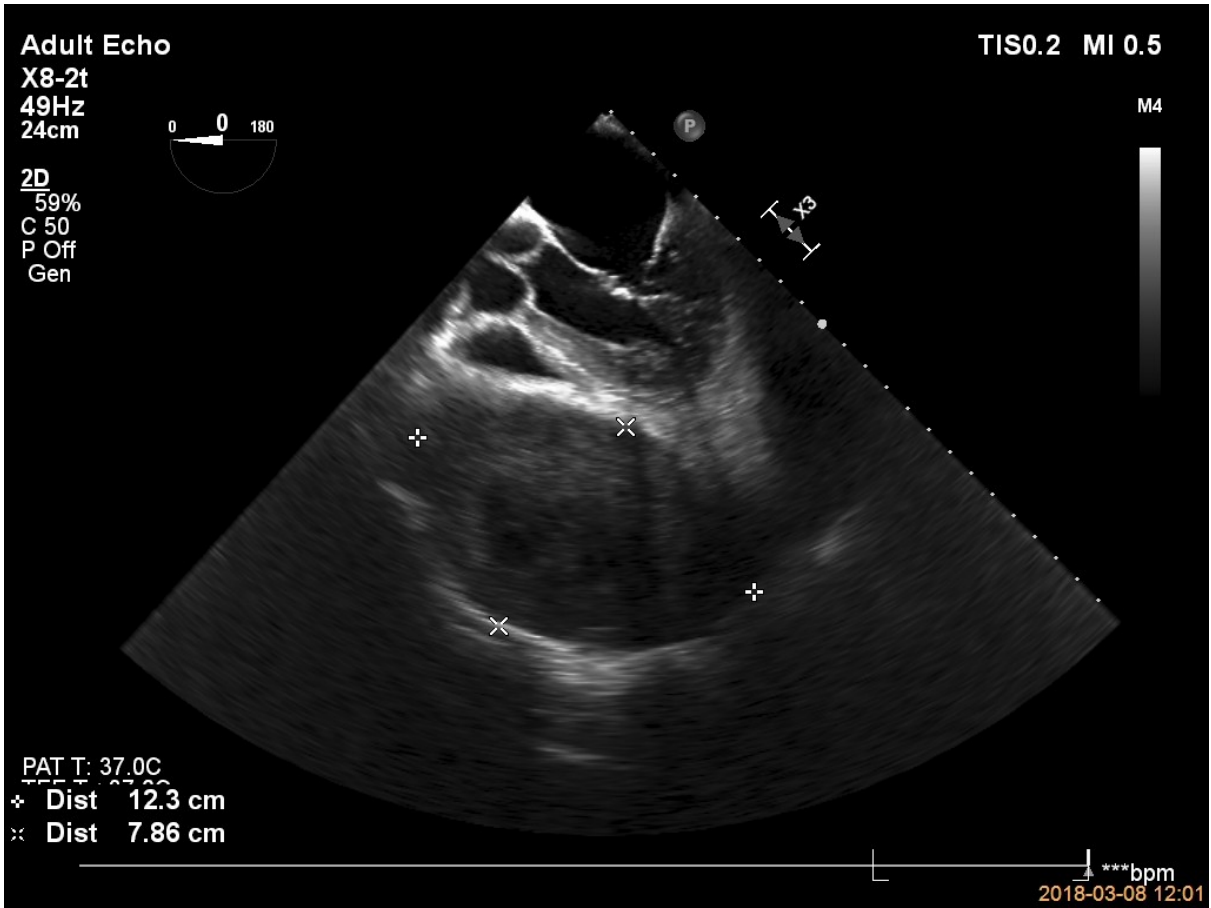


Fig. 2. Large tumor in the anterior mediastinum

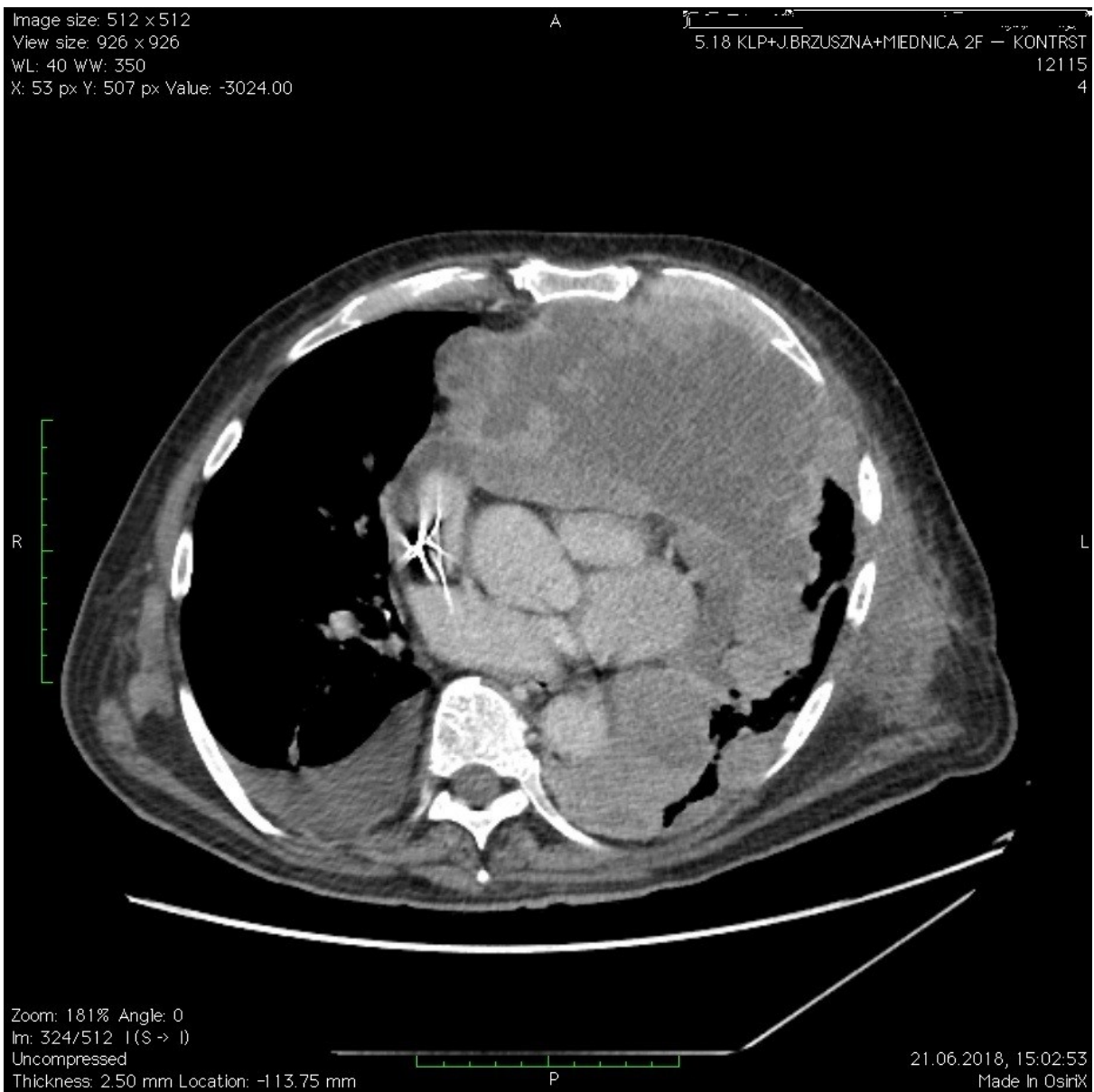


Fig. 3. Tumor with polycyclic outlines in the anterior mediastinum