Congenital infiltrating lipomatosis of the face with hyperplastic mandibular, maxillary and pterygoid bones: case report and a review of literature

Abstract: Congenital infiltrating lipomatosis of the face (CILF) is a rare lipomatous lesion, commonly seen in childhood, and it is characterized by collections of mature, unencapsulated adipose tissues that infiltrate facial soft and hard tissues. The lesion is seen as an overgrowth of bone and soft tissue and is generally present clinically as slow-growing painless masses. In this case report, we described one case of CILF, which is one of the first cases reported in Ghana and Africa as a whole, along with a literature review on the diagnosis and current treatment strategies.

Keywords: congenital infiltrating lipomatosis of face, facial asymmetry analysis, hemifacial hyperplasia, macrodontism

Introduction

Congenital infiltrating lipomatosis of the face (CILF) is a very rare lipomatous lesion with <60 reported cases in literature.1–3 CILF is nonhereditary and usually seen in childhood, causing unilateral facial skeletal hyperplasia, and it is histologically characterized by collections of mature, unencapsulated adipose tissues that infiltrate facial soft and hard tissues.1–4,7 The primary concern in CILF is usually esthetics and the high rate of recurrence after surgical excision, as patients present with normal psychomotor development, and there is no sex predilection.7,8 In this case report, we present an additional case of CILF, which is one of the first cases reported in Ghana and Africa as a whole, along with a discussion on the diagnosis and treatment of CILF, with the aim of providing information toward the management of this rare condition.

Case report

A 9-year-old male patient presented with a painless right facial swelling, which had been present since birth and had progressively been increasing in size. Examination revealed facial asymmetry with a right hemifacial swelling spanning from the lower border of the right mandible to the inferior right lower eyelid measuring ~10×15 cm. There was enlargement of the right ear and a bulge on the right parietal scalp. The lesion was soft, non-tender and mobile with hyperpigmentation of the postauricular skin. There was deviation of the lip and nose to the left with obliteration of the right nasolabial sulcus indicating a right facial palsy. Oral examination revealed right-sided lip and tongue enlargement, right palatal bulge, right-sided dental anarchy with anterior open bite and calculus deposition.

Computed tomography (CT) of the head region showed a large lipomatous transformation of the right side of the face, involving the subcutaneous layer and the right...
The diagnosis of CILF in our case was based on the patient’s medical records, clinicopathological manifestations, and...
and imaging features from CT (Figures 1–5). The CT scan was particularly useful in demonstrating the lipomatous nature of mass, osseous changes and their exact anatomic location and relationship to surrounding structures prior to surgery. Diagnosis of CILF was however confirmed by histopathology. The lesion was histologically characterized by sheets or lobules of mature normal adipocytes infiltrating trabecular bone, muscle fibers and salivary glands.28,29

Bone changes reported in CILF cases include hypertrophy of the skull, hypertrophy of the zygomatic bone, cervical vertebrae, acceleration of dentooskeletal growth, hemimandibular hypertrophy and sclerosis.30–33 These changes in bone appear to be associated with periosteal irritation associated with the overlying mass, regional malformation of mesenchyme affecting bone and soft tissues or increased vascularity.30,33,34 Li et al35 in their review of 59 reported cases of CILF noted

Figure 1 Lipomatous infiltration of the right side of the face, including the parotid gland and masticator space.
Figure 2 CT scan showing the enlarged pterygoid. Abbreviation: CT, computed tomography.
Figure 3 CT scan showing the enlarged right mandible. Abbreviation: CT, computed tomography.
Figure 4 CT scan showing the enlarged maxilla. Abbreviation: CT, computed tomography.
that the bony asymmetry appears to increase with age, with the adipose tissue infiltrating into surrounding tissues and causing pterygoid gland and muscles (such as pterygoid plate and masseter and temporalis muscles) involvement, as reported in our cases.

The major concern in the treatment of CILF is the high rate of recurrence after surgical excision although the tumor is benign, with a recent study reporting as high as 79% rate of recurrence.\textsuperscript{1,8,35} As a result, multiple surgeries are needed for cosmetic reasons, and when necessary, osseous reduction operations of the maxilla and mandible are performed.\textsuperscript{21,35,36} Based on the esthetic requirement of the patient, a multidisciplinary approach that involves surgeons, clinicians, dentists, psychologists and geneticists may be ideal.\textsuperscript{22,29,37} The high rate of recurrence may be the result of incomplete resection, as these fatty lesions are histologically benign, and as such, the value of aggressive extirpation needs to be weighed against the facial nerve damage and the likelihood of the resultant deformity.\textsuperscript{38}

Tracy et al in 2013 reported a conservative approach involving targeted chemotherapy and surgical resection in the management of CILF. The use of celecoxib and imatinib in personalized targeted chemotherapy was associated with improved facial symmetry without evidence of disease progression, thus paving the way for the exploration of this synergistic approach toward the management of this rare condition.\textsuperscript{41} Conservative approach has also been reinforced by several authors on the backdrop of the benign nature and critical location of CILF despite the associated high rate of recurrences.\textsuperscript{23,28,39}

A recent study in 2017 by Kalantary et al\textsuperscript{40} proposed a new multistep surgical approach toward the management of CILF. This involves initial debulking to correct the soft tissue asymmetry, followed by orthognathic surgery to correct the skeletal asymmetry, dental problems and associated malocclusion, cautioning however that each patient needs to be evaluated for this additional surgery on the bony level before carrying out this step, and finally bimaxillary procedure and genioplasty. The surgery was successfully performed when the patient was 14 years (after puberty), with no record of clinical recurrence at the time of publication (patient was 18 years then).

In addition, considering the implication of PIK3CA gene mutation in the pathogenic theory of CILF, inhibitors of PI3K, which are currently been used in clinical trials involving cancer patients, may play a role in CILF patients.\textsuperscript{17} PI3K inhibitors may therefore be tested for CILF patients in clinical trials in the near future.\textsuperscript{35}

An area of contention in the treatment of CILF is the timing of surgical excision. Slavin et al\textsuperscript{7} in their earlier studies encouraged early aggressive surgery in a bid to improve facial appearance and control the overgrowth. Van Wingerden et al\textsuperscript{41} disagreed with this approach on the basis of possible risk to nerve, which is compounded by multiple procedures and the likelihood of recurrence. They however admitted that the postponement of surgery may make the procedure more extensive, along with associated psychosocial issues. They further argued that the delay in surgery lowers the chances of damaging the facial nerve, may require fewer procedures and there will be more mature contralateral cheek for comparison during the procedure. Padwa and Mulliken\textsuperscript{21} also sided with Van Wingerden et al, observing that growth hormone most probably has a role in recurrences and that any effort to reduce the mass before the end of adolescence is bound to fail due to recurrences. Based on our study, we advocate that extensive resection should be delayed as long as possible, with due consideration to psychosocial issues. Elevation of the ptotic upper lip, liposuction and the excision of mucosal neuromas are among the temporary measures that can be taken to improve asymmetry in young patients with minimal risk.\textsuperscript{21}
Conclusion

CILF is a rare congenital disorder, histologically characterized by sheets or lobules of mature normal adipocytes infiltrating trabecular bone, muscle fibers and salivary glands. The proximity of vital anatomic structures and the diffuse nature of the disease pose a greater challenge to surgical resection. In this article, we reported an additional case of CILF and did an extensive review of the diagnosis and treatment of the condition, providing information toward the management of this rare disorder.

Disclosure

The authors report no conflicts of interest in this work.

References
