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**Bifocal medulloblastoma in an adult: A case report and review of the literature**

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**Abstract**

Medulloblastoma is a malignant embryonal neuroepithelial tumour, rarely occurring in adults. The 2021 WHO CNS classification subdivided medulloblastoma into 4 groups based on molecular data, which may correspond to morphological features on imaging which are useful to recognise. Differential diagnoses in adults include ependymoma, hemangioblastoma, metastases, lymphoma, and high-grade glioma.

We report the case of a double cerebellar medulloblastoma in a 34-year-old adult. We also highlight the differential diagnosis between medulloblastoma and other posterior cerebellar fossa tumours in adults providing practical elements to help suggest the most accurate diagnosis.

**Keywords:** Adults medulloblastoma; CNS WHO 2021 classification; CT; MRI; Differential diagnosis.

**1. Introduction**

Medulloblastoma occurs predominantly in children, with a peak age of 5 years and a slight male predominance. Its occurrence in adults remains rare, but should always be suspected on imaging.

We report a case of a double cerebellar medulloblastoma occurring in a 34-year-old adult.

**2. Case report**

A 34-year-old male, without a noticeable medical history, presented with ataxia and intracranial hypertension syndrome that developed over a month, accompanied by a decline in overall health.

A brain CT scan revealed two intra-axial, bilateral rounded cerebellar lesions, quite well limited, isodense, with discreet enhancement after contrast media agent administration. These lesions compressed the fourth ventricle, resulting in an active triventricular hydrocephalus (figure 1). These two lesions appeared on MRI as hypointense T1, discretely hyperintense T2 lesions with some cystic areas, diffusion restriction and discrete enhancement after gadolinium-containing contrast agent administration (figure 2).
**Figure 1** Brain CT scan in axial sections before (a) and after administration of contrast media agent (b, c), showing two isodense hemispheric cerebellar processes, discreetly enhanced (red arrowhead), and surrounded by oedema. They have a mass effect on the 4th ventricle, which is responsible for a triventricular hydrocephalus.

**Figure 2** Brain MRI in the same patient, showing the cerebellar processes (red arrowhead) in hypersignal T2 and FLAIR (a, d), hypersignal diffusion with very low ADC (b, e), hyposignal T1 (c), discreetly enhanced after gadolinium containing contrast agent administration (f).

After stereotaxic biopsy, pathology revealed a malignant tumour proliferation, formed by small round cells arranged in diffuse sheets with pseudorosettes and nodular foci: these findings were consistent with a classic medulloblastoma.
### 3. Discussion

Medulloblastoma is an undifferentiated neuroepithelial tumour, characterised by its aggressive nature, and its prevalence frequently in children: it affects children under the age of 15 in 80% of cases, with a peak prevalence at age 5. However, medulloblastoma can occur in adults (around 30 years old), accounting for 1% of brain tumours in this age range. [1]

The new WHO 2021 classification of CNS tumours has classified medulloblastomas into two categories: histologically diagnosed medulloblastomas (classic, desmoplastic/nodular, medulloblastoma with extensive nodularity (MBEN), and large cell/anaplastic) and molecularly diagnosed medulloblastomas (WNT-activated, SHH-activated, non-WNT/non-SHH: group 3 and group 4) that give a better prediction of clinical behaviour and outcome [2, 5]. However, there is a correlation between these two items: desmoplastic/nodular medulloblastomas and MBEN are in the SHH molecular group, 94% of WNT tumours have a classic morphology, and most large cell/anaplastic tumours belong either to the SHH-3 subgroup or to non-WNT/non-SHH group. [2, 3]

Various studies report that the lateralized location of medulloblastoma is more frequent in adults than in children. In clinical terms, this cerebellar hemisphere localization would result in a kinetic cerebellar syndrome and a vestibular syndrome, rather than a static cerebellar syndrome. In adults, reports of intracranial hypertension syndrome are less common and are revealed later than in children [1, 4]

Medulloblastoma is a tumour that is very prone to dissemination through the CSF, which could explain secondary cerebral, medullary, or leptomeningeal locations; in this case, they manifest in the form of nodular lesions, preferably peripheral in location [4], and should be systematically investigated with gadolinium-enhanced T1 MRI of the brain and the entire spinal canal. [5]

In adults, it appears as a hyperdense mass on a CT scan that is lateralized and has a well-defined margin. It may also include cystic or necrotic regions and calcifications. In MRI, it appears as hypointense T1, iso or hyperintense T2/FLAIR, diffusion hyperintense with low ADC values. Whether in CT or MRI, this tumour shows discrete homogeneous or heterogeneous enhancement after contrast media administration. [4]

Some studies have shown that morphological features in imaging strongly orient towards specific groups: medulloblastomas centred on the cerebellar peduncles often belong to the WNT-activated group, which has a good prognosis. Hemispheric location is often associated with the SHH-activated group, which has a poor prognosis. A medial location associated with minimal enhancement suggests a group 3 or 4 medulloblastoma. [6]

The differential diagnosis of medulloblastoma in adults includes ependymoma, hemangioblastoma, metastases, lymphoma, and high-grade glioma. Ependymoma is the primary differential diagnosis, which is frequently confused with medulloblastoma. However, many studies have shown distinguishing features: medulloblastoma in adults arises around the age of 30 (earlier than ependymoma), is frequently lateralized to the cerebellar hemispheres, has a low ADC, and has little or no enhancement after contrast agent administration [6]. Table 1 shows the main clinical and radiological characteristics of medulloblastoma and its differential diagnoses. [5, 7]
**Table 1** Main clinical and radiological features of adult medulloblastoma and its differential diagnoses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Medulloblastoma</th>
<th>Ependymoma</th>
<th>Hemangioblastoma</th>
<th>Metastases</th>
<th>Lymphoma</th>
<th>High-grade glioma</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average age</strong></td>
<td>Adult ≈ 30 years</td>
<td>Adult &gt; 50 years</td>
<td>Adult ≈ 30 years</td>
<td>Without peak</td>
<td>Adult ≈ 50 years</td>
<td>Adult ≈ 50 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Location</strong></td>
<td>cerebellar hemisphere</td>
<td>In the 4th ventricle</td>
<td>Hemisphere: 2/3 of case</td>
<td>Vermis: 1/3 of case</td>
<td>Variable, multiples++</td>
<td>Periventricular</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Brain stem, Cerebellum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CT scan</strong></td>
<td>hyperdense</td>
<td>Heterogeneous Iso or hyperdense</td>
<td>Large cystic component with a mural nodule</td>
<td>Iso or hypodense</td>
<td>Iso or hyperdense</td>
<td>Heterogeneous Hypodense (hemorrhage and necrosis)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MRI</strong></td>
<td>T1 hypointense</td>
<td>Iso, hypointense</td>
<td>Iso signal</td>
<td>Iso, hypo or hypersignal (depends on the primary lesion)</td>
<td>Iso or hyposignal</td>
<td>Heterogeneous hyposignal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T2 iso or hyperintense</td>
<td>Hyperintense with low ADC</td>
<td>Hypersignal with high ADC</td>
<td>Hyperintense with low ADC</td>
<td>Hyperintense with low ADC</td>
<td>Hyperintense with low ADC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Diffusion</strong></td>
<td>Hyperintense with low ADC</td>
<td>Hypersignal with high ADC</td>
<td>Hypersignal with high ADC</td>
<td>Hypersignal with low ADC</td>
<td>Hypersignal with low ADC</td>
<td>Hypersignal with low ADC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Contrast enhancement</strong></td>
<td>Discrete or no enhancement</td>
<td>Intense enhancement of mural nodule</td>
<td>Intense enhancement of mural nodule</td>
<td>Variable</td>
<td>Intense and homogeneous (heterogeneous in immunocompromised)</td>
<td>Heterogeneous (nodular or annular)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Oedema</strong></td>
<td>Present</td>
<td>discrete</td>
<td>Often absent</td>
<td>Marked</td>
<td>Marked</td>
<td>Marked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cyst</strong></td>
<td>Small areas</td>
<td>Small areas</td>
<td>Predominantly</td>
<td>Present: necrosis</td>
<td>Unusual</td>
<td>Variable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Calcification</strong></td>
<td>Rare</td>
<td>Nodular (&gt;50%)</td>
<td>Absent</td>
<td>Rare</td>
<td>unusual</td>
<td>curvilinear clods</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Conclusion

Adult medulloblastoma has a different appearance than childhood medulloblastoma, with a better response to treatment and prognosis. This diagnosis should be considered in adults without forgetting other differential diagnoses.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

No conflict of interest is to be disclosed.

Statement of informed consent

Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

References


