

Suspicious breast pseudocalcifications

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DESCRIPTION

We present a follow-up case of an invasive right ductal breast carcinoma in a 72-year-old woman.

A follow-up mammography study (figure 1) performed 1 year after right lumpectomy (wide local excision) shows postsurgical changes in the right breast and reveals 'de novo' coarse/amorphous microcalcifications in the left breast axis. Some of these calcifications show radiolucent centre, and can only be depicted in the cranio-caudal mammographic images, raising concern for hypothetic cutaneous location, although presenting suspicious features.

Cancer biomarkers and clinical status were unremarkable.

An ultrasound (US) evaluation was further advised. The patient was told not to apply any cream, lotion or deodorant on the day of the US study. Two weeks later, the patient was referred for

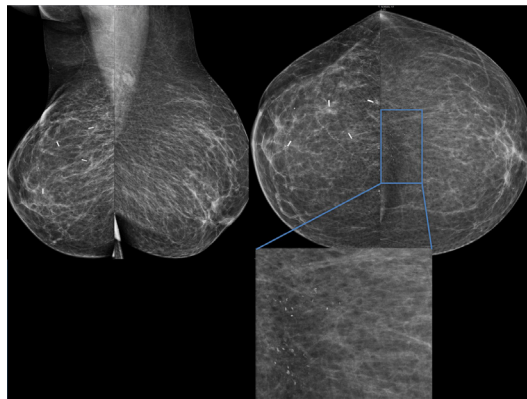


Figure 1 Mammographic images showing postlumpectomy (wide local excision) changes in the right upper outer quadrant and coarse and amorphous calcifications in the left breast. Blue square shows the magnification of the calcifications, revealing some calcifications with radiolucent centre.

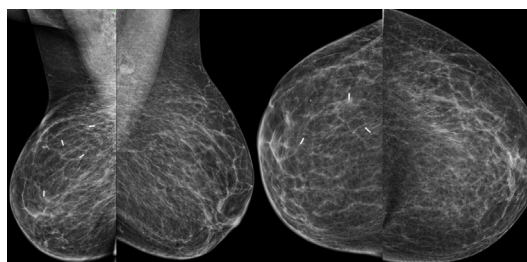


Figure 2 Mammographic images obtained 2 weeks after revealing the total absence of the calcifications—pseudocalcifications due to previous application of zinc-based ointment on the breast sulcus.

the US examination. The evaluation was unremarkable. On the same day, a mammography study was repeated (figure 2) revealing total absence of the calcifications previously seen.

The patient reveals previous use of a zinc-based ointment on the breast sulcus, which she applied on the day of the first mammographic study. Ointment, deodorant and talcum may contain radiopaque components such as zinc, aluminium and magnesium, which may simulate calcifications at mammography.^{1 2}

Artefacts reduce the quality of mammograms and may mimic or obscure abnormalities and cause interpretation errors.³

This case highlights the importance of obtaining high-quality mammographic images for accurate diagnosis as mammographic artefacts may obscure the true abnormalities or create pseudolesions.

Learning points

- ▶ Ointment, deodorant and talcum may contain radiopaque components such as zinc, aluminium and magnesium, which may simulate calcifications at mammography.
- ▶ To prevent these artefacts, technologists should inform the patients, in advance, not to wear powder, deodorant and body cream or ointment prior to the mammographic examination.
- ▶ Mammographic artefacts may obscure the true abnormalities or create pseudolesions.

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