A rare testicular vein anatomical variant contributes to right-sided varicocele formation and leads to the diagnosis of renal cell carcinoma

James William Ryan, Gavin Sugrue, Sandra Graham, Carmel Cronin

Department of Radiology,
Mater Misericordiae University
Hospital, Dublin, Ireland

Correspondence to
Dr James William Ryan,
jamesryannchd@gmail.com

Accepted 2 June 2017

DESCRIPTION

A man in his 60s presented for a testicular ultrasound due to asymptomatic scrotal swelling. Ultrasound showed a right-sided varicocele (figure 1). A varicocele is an abnormal dilatation of the pampiniform venous plexus in the scrotum. A renal ultrasound demonstrated a heterogeneous mass arising from the right kidney (figure 2). Histology subsequently revealed a renal cell carcinoma. CT identified duplication of the right testicular vein (figure 3). The first emptied into the inferior vena cava (IVC) as expected. The second had a tortuous course arcing over the upper pole of the right kidney and emptying into the right renal vein (figure 4). Tumour extension into the

right renal vein obstructed inflow from this accessory testicular vein and contributed to varicocele formation (figure 5). Less than 1% of males have duplicate right testicular vein anatomy.¹

Ninety-three per cent of varicoceles occur on the left, the majority of which have a non-pathological aetiology.² Differences in testicular vein length,

Figure 1 Doppler ultrasound of the right testicle; the green arrow points to a dilated vein in the pampiniform plexus. There is sustained flow reversal in this vessel during Valsalva.

Figure 2 Ultrasound of the right kidney; there is a large mass lesion arising from the right kidney.

Figure 3 Contrast-enhanced CT of the abdomen portal venous phase. The right testicular vein is circled medially, the accessory right testicular vein laterally.

Figure 4 Three-dimensional reconstruction of the accessory right renal vein.

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To cite: Ryan JW, Sugrue G, Graham S, et al. *BMJ Case Rep* Published Online First: [please include Day Month Year]. doi:10.1136/bcr-2017-219519

Figure 5 Contrast-enhanced CT of the abdomen arterial phase. The green arrow points to an enhancing renal tumour extending to involve the right renal vein. The red arrow points to the inferior vena cava, which is not involved. The yellow arrow points to the normal left renal vein.

drainage and angle of insertion contribute to the left-sided predominance.³ The prevalence of varicocele increases with age at a rate of approximately 10% per decade of life. Up to 53% of males in their 60s will have a varicocele.⁴ Pathological causes of varicocele include extrinsic compression by a retroperitoneal mass and venous thrombosis.² Varicoceles may present with pain, scrotal swelling and can be diagnosed on clinical examination.¹ Subclinical varicoceles require imaging for diagnosis.⁵ Doppler ultrasound is the imaging modality of choice. Factors such as vessel diameter and flow reversal on Valsalva can be used to diagnose and grade varicoceles.⁵

Learning points

- ▶ Varicocele prevalence increases with age at a rate of approximately 10% per decade,⁴ and 93% occur on the left.²
- ▶ Right-sided varicocele in an adult should always prompt further imaging to rule out pathological causes.
- ▶ Doppler ultrasound is the imaging modality of choice in the diagnosis and grading of subclinical varicoceles as it has high diagnostic accuracy and is non-invasive.⁵

Contributors JWR is the first author. GS acquired images. SG provided reconstructed three-dimensional images. CC is the senior author.

Competing interests None declared.

Patient consent Detail has been removed from this case description/these case descriptions to ensure anonymity. The editors and reviewers have seen the detailed information available and are satisfied that the information backs up the case the authors are making.

Provenance and peer review Not commissioned; externally peer reviewed.

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