

The Great Mimicker: A Case of Disseminated Tuberculosis

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Abstract : Introduction: Mycobacterium tuberculosis post a major health problem worldwide. Central nervous system (CNS) infection by mycobacterium tuberculosis is one of the most devastating complications of tuberculosis. Although with advancement in medical fields, we are yet to understand the pathophysiology of how mycobacterium tuberculosis was able to cross the blood-brain barrier (BBB) and infect the CNS. CNS TB may present with nonspecific clinical symptoms which can mimic other diseases/conditions; this is what makes the diagnosis relatively difficult and challenging. Public health has to be informed and educated about the spread of TB, and early identification of TB is important as it is a curable disease. Case Report: A young 21-year-old Malay gentleman was initially presented to us with symptoms of ear discharge, tinnitus, and right-sided headache for the past one year. Further history reveals that the symptoms have been mismanaged and neglected over the period of 1 year. Initial investigation reveals features of inflammation of the ear. Further imaging showed the feature of chronic inflammation of the otitis media and atypical right cerebral abscess, which has the same characteristic features and consistency. He further underwent a biopsy, and results reveal positive Mycobacterium tuberculosis of the otitis media. With the results and the available imaging, we were certain that this is likely a case of disseminated tuberculosis causing CNS TB. Conclusion: We aim to highlight the challenge and difficult face in our health care system and public health in early identification and treatment.

Keywords : central nervous system tuberculosis, intracranial tuberculosis, tuberculous encephalopathy, tuberculous meningitis

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