MINIREVIEWS

8808  Ear, nose, and throat manifestations of COVID-19 and its vaccines
Al-Ani RM

8816  Potential influences of religiosity and religious coping strategies on people with diabetes
Onyishi CN, Eseadi C, Ilechukwu LC, Okoro KN, Okolie CN, Egbule E, Asogwa E

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Case Control Study

8827  Effectiveness of six-step complex decongestive therapy for treating upper limb lymphedema after breast cancer surgery

Retrospective Study

8837  Hospital admissions from alcohol-related acute pancreatitis during the COVID-19 pandemic: A single-centre study
Mak WK, Di Mauro D, Pearce E, Karran L, Myintmo A, Duckworth J, Orabi A, Lane R, Holloway S, Manzelli A, Mossadegh S

8844  Indocyanine green plasma clearance rate and 99mTc-galactosyl human serum albumin single-photon emission computed tomography evaluated preoperative remnant liver
Iwaki K, Kathara S, Kitamurak K, Hashida H, Uryuhara K

8854  Arthroscopy with subscapularis upper one-third tenodesis for treatment of recurrent anterior shoulder instability independent of glenoid bone loss

8863  Evaluation of the prognostic nutritional index for the prognosis of Chinese patients with high/extremely high-risk prostate cancer after radical prostatectomy
Yang F, Pan M, Nie J, Xiao F, Zhang Y

Observational Study

8872  Chlorine poisoning caused by improper mixing of household disinfectants during the COVID-19 pandemic: Case series
Lin GD, Wu JY, Peng XB, Lu XX, Liu ZY, Pan ZG, Qiu ZW, Dong JG

8880  Mental health of the Slovak population during COVID-19 pandemic: A cross-sectional survey
Kralova M, Brazinova A, Sivcova V, Izakova L
### Prospective Study

**8893**  
Arthroscopic anatomical reconstruction of lateral collateral ligaments with ligament advanced reinforcement system artificial ligament for chronic ankle instability  
*Wang Y, Zhu JX*

### SYSTEMATIC REVIEWS

**8906**  
How to select the quantitative magnetic resonance technique for subjects with fatty liver: A systematic review  
*Li YW, Jiao Y, Chen N, Gao Q, Chen YK, Zhang YF, Wen QP, Zhang ZM*

**8922**  
Lymphocytic choriomeningitis virus: An under-recognized congenital teratogen  
*Ferenc T, Vujica M, Mežlfak A, Vilbic-Cavlek T*

### CASE REPORT

**8932**  
Alagille syndrome associated with total anomalous pulmonary venous connection and severe xanthomas: A case report  

**8939**  
Colo-colonic intussusception with post-polypectomy electrocoagulation syndrome: A case report  
*Moon JY, Lee MR, Yun SK, Ha GW*

**8945**  
Portal vein gas combined with pneumatosis intestinalis and emphysematous cystitis: A case report and literature review  
*Hu SF, Liu HB, Hao YY*

**8954**  
Quadricuspid aortic valve and right ventricular type of myocardial bridging in an asymptomatic middle-aged woman: A case report  
*Sopek Merkaš I, Lakušić N, Paar MH*

**8962**  
Treatment of gastric carcinoma with lymphoid stroma by immunotherapy: A case report  
*Cui YJ, Ren YY, Zhang HZ*

**8968**  
Gallstone associated celiac trunk thromboembolisms complicated with splenic infarction: A case report  
*Wu CY, Su CC, Huang HH, Wang YT, Wang CC*

**8974**  
Extracorporeal membrane oxygenation for lung cancer-related life-threatening hypoxia: A case report  
*Yoo SS, Lee SY, Choi SH*

**8980**  
Multi-disciplinary treatment of maxillofacial skeletal deformities by orthognathic surgery combined with periodontal phenotype modification: A case report  
*Liu JY, Li GF, Tang Y, Yan FH, Tan BC*

**8990**  
X-linked recessive Kallmann syndrome: A case report  
*Zhang P, Fu JY*

**8998**  
Delayed complications of intradural cement leakage after percutaneous vertebroplasty: A case report  
*Ma QH, Liu GP, Sun Q, Li JG*
Coexistent Kaposi sarcoma and post-transplant lymphoproliferative disorder in the same lymph nodes after pediatric liver transplantation: A case report

Misdiagnosis of pancreatic metastasis from renal cell carcinoma: A case report
Liang XK, Li LJ, He YM, Xu ZF

Discoid medial meniscus of both knees: A case report
Zheng ZR, Ma H, Yang F, Yuan L, Wang GD, Zhao XW, Ma LF

Simultaneous laparoscopic and arthroscopic excision of a huge juxta-articular ganglionic cyst compressing the sciatic nerve: A case report
Choi WK, Oh JS, Yoon SJ

One-stage revision arthroplasty in a patient with ochronotic arthropathy accompanied by joint infection: A case report
Wang XC, Zhang XM, Cai WL, Li Z, Ma C, Liu YH, He QL, Yan TS, Cao XW

Bladder paraganglioma after kidney transplantation: A case report
Wang L, Zhang YN, Chen GY

Total spinal anesthesia caused by lidocaine during unilateral percutaneous vertebroplasty performed under local anesthesia: A case report
Wang YF, Bian ZY, Li XX, Hu YX, Jiang L

Ruptured splenic artery aneurysms in pregnancy and usefulness of endovascular treatment in selective patients: A case report and review of literature
Lee SH, Yang S, Park I, Im YC, Kim GY

Gastrointestinal metastasis secondary to invasive lobular carcinoma of the breast: A case report
Li LX, Zhang D, Ma F

Post-bulbar duodenal ulcer with anterior perforation with kissing ulcer and duodenocaval fistula: A case report and review of literature
Alzerwi N

Modified orthodontic treatment of substitution of canines by first premolars: A case report
Li FF, Li M, Li M, Yang X

Renal cell carcinoma presented with a rare case of icteric Stauffer syndrome: A case report
Popov DR, Antonov KA, Atanasova EG, Pentchev CP, Milatchkov LM, Petkova MD, Neykov KG, Nikolov RK

Successful resection of a huge retroperitoneal venous hemangioma: A case report
Qin Y, Qiao P, Guan X, Zeng S, Hu XP, Wang B

Malignant transformation of biliary adenofibroma combined with benign lymphadenopathy mimicking advanced liver carcinoma: A case report
## Contents

**World Journal of Clinical Cases**

**Thrice Monthly Volume 10 Number 25 September 6, 2022**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Authors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9112</td>
<td>Congenital hepatic cyst: Eleven case reports</td>
<td>Du CX, Lu CG, Li W, Tang WB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9121</td>
<td>Endovascular treatment of a ruptured pseudoaneurysm of the internal carotid artery in a patient with nasopharyngeal cancer: A case report</td>
<td>Park JS, Jang HG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9127</td>
<td>Varicella-zoster virus meningitis after spinal anesthesia: A case report</td>
<td>Lee YW, Yoo B, Lim YH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9132</td>
<td>Chondrosarcoma of the toe: A case report and literature review</td>
<td>Zhou LB, Zhang HC, Dong ZG, Wang CC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9142</td>
<td>Tamsulosin-induced life-threatening hypotension in a patient with spinal cord injury: A case report</td>
<td>Lee JY, Lee HS, Park SB, Lee KH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9148</td>
<td>CCNO mutation as a cause of primary ciliary dyskinesia: A case report</td>
<td>Zhang YY, Lou Y, Yan H, Tang H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9156</td>
<td>Repeated bacteremia and hepatic cyst infection lasting 3 years following pancreatoduodenectomy: A case report</td>
<td>Zhang K, Zhang HL, Guo Q, Tu CY, Lv XL, Zhu JD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9162</td>
<td>Idiopathic cholesterol crystal embolism with atheroembolic renal disease and blue toes syndrome: A case report</td>
<td>Cheng DJ, Li L, Zheng XY, Tang SF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9168</td>
<td>Systemic lupus erythematosus with visceral varicella: A case report</td>
<td>Zhao J, Tian M</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**LETTER TO THE EDITOR**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Authors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9176</td>
<td>Imaging of fibroadenoma: Be careful with imaging follow-up</td>
<td>Ece B, Aydin S</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[Image of the page]
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RESPONSIBLE EDITORS FOR THIS ISSUE
Production Editor: Xu Guo; Production Department Director: Xiang Li; Editorial Office Director: Jin-Lei Wang.
Successful resection of a huge retroperitoneal venous hemangioma: A case report

Yan Qin, Peng Qiao, Xing Guan, Song Zeng, Xiao-Peng Hu, Biao Wang

Abstract

BACKGROUND
Venous hemangioma is a benign and non-invasive type of tumor, which is rarely identified due to the absence of clinical manifestations. A retroperitoneal benign tumor is comparatively rare, and hemangioma is exceptional. Because of the different types and locations of hemangioma, presentations are varied; thus, establishing an accurate diagnosis before surgery is challenging.

CASE SUMMARY
A 45-year-old female patient visited our hospital with the complaint of a retroperitoneal mass without symptoms discovered during a medical examination. An abdominal and pelvic computed tomography (CT) revealed a giant hypodense mass that extended from the lower edge of the liver down to the right groin and showed no marked enhancement in the arterial phase of the enhanced CT. On magnetic resonance imaging, the retroperitoneal mass was hyperintense on the T2-weighted image and hypointense on the T1-weighted image. The mass was completely resected and confirmed as a venous hemangioma by pathology.

CONCLUSION
Venous hemangioma is rare in adults, and an accurate diagnosis before surgery is challenging. Surgery is the curative treatment for venous hemangioma, and the definitive diagnosis relies on pathology.

Key Words: Retroperitoneal hemangioma; Venous hemangioma; Diagnosis; Case report
Core Tip: Venous hemangioma is a benign disease which is rarely reported as it lacks clinical manifestations. However, many cases have presented with abdominal symptoms. An accurate diagnosis before surgery is challenging due to non-specific manifestations and low incidence. Surgery is the first-line treatment for venous hemangioma, and the definitive diagnosis depends on pathology.

INTRODUCTION
Venous hemangioma is defined as a benign tumor consisting of vein-like vessels, and is a rare but clinically significant disease. The lesion may occur in various sites but is rarely found in the retroperitoneum[1,2]. Retroperitoneal hemangioma is extremely rare and accounts for less than 5% of all retroperitoneal tumors in adults[3]. Data indicate that abdominal distension and pain are the two most common manifestations. To the best of our knowledge, only a few isolated cases have been reported. Due to the different locations and varied manifestations of venous hemangioma, establishing an accurate diagnosis before surgery is challenging. We here report a case of giant venous hemangioma in the retroperitoneum and review the literature concerning the clinical and pathological features of this disease.

CASE PRESENTATION
Chief complaints
A 45-year-old female patient visited our hospital with the complaint of a retroperitoneal mass without symptoms discovered during a medical examination.

History of present illness
The patient was found to have a retroperitoneal mass during a physical examination at another hospital 5 mo previously, and ultrasonography revealed a large anechoic mass that occupied almost all of the right side of the peritoneal cavity.

Physical examination
A physical examination revealed no mass and tenderness in the abdomen.

Laboratory examinations
Laboratory tests showed no abnormalities.

Imaging examinations
Abdominal computed tomography (CT) (Figure 1A and B) revealed an enormous hypodense mass extending from the lower edge of the liver down to the right groin, with a regular margin and without marked enhancement in the arterial phase of the enhanced CT, which suggested a benign tumor. Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) (Figure 1C and D) revealed a retroperitoneal mass with low signal intensity on the T1-weighted image and high signal intensity on the T2-weighted image. A benign cyst in the right retroperitoneum was diagnosed based on these findings.

FINAL DIAGNOSIS
Retroperitoneal venous hemangioma.

TREATMENT
A laparoscopic exploration and cystectomy were performed. During the laparoscopic surgery, it was found that a milky white cystic neoplasm measuring approximately 20 cm was loosely attached to the
muscular tissue. The tumor displaced the intestine and caused compression of the inferior vena cava, right kidney, as well as the bladder, without signs of infiltration. Moreover, the mass protruded from the retroperitoneal space into the duodenal wall, and was firmly attached to the wall of the second part of the duodenum and the head of the pancreas. Therefore, we chose to separate the loosely attached capsule wall initially, and milky liquid was noted during the separation process. The fluid was immediately taken for laboratory testing, and the results indicated that amylase was not elevated. About 2 L of milky white liquid was drained intraoperatively. Then to protect the duodenum and pancreas, the cystic wall which was tightly adhered to the duodenum was removed by laparotomy. There was no significant blood loss, and the entire capsule wall was completely resected (Figure 2). A 8 cm grayish specimen and a 5 cm fawn cystic specimen were obtained for pathological examination. Microscopic examination showed that the cystic wall was lined by a single layer of flattened cells, with smooth muscle cells and adipose tissue located around this layer. The immunohistochemical study showed that these cells stained positive for smooth muscle actin (SMA) and vascular marker CD34, and some endothelial cells were positive for CD31 and D2-40. No atypical cells with hyperproliferation or mitotic division were observed, and the proliferation marker (Ki-67 antigen) expression was less than 5 (Figure 3). In brief, these findings indicated that the retroperitoneal mass, which was derived from the vein, was a venous hemangioma.

OUTCOME AND FOLLOW-UP

The patient had an uneventful recovery, and no residual mass in the retroperitoneum was verified on CT scan 1 mo postoperatively. At the 6-mo follow-up evaluation, the patient was doing well without recurrence of hemangioma.

DISCUSSION

Venous hemangioma is a benign and non-invasive type of tumor, and is rarely identified due to the absence of clinical manifestations. A retroperitoneal benign tumor is comparatively rare, and hemangiomas are exceptional. Most hemangiomas are present at birth, some regress spontaneously, and others proliferate during puberty or pregnancy or following local trauma[4]. Hemangiomas may occur
Qin Y et al. Retroperitoneal venous hemangioma

Figure 2 During operation, the cystic wall with duodenal adhesion was completely removed by laparotomy (as shown by the arrow).

Figure 3 Pathologic findings of the venous hemangioma. A: The specimen tissues are composed of various-sized cystic cavities with walls consisting of single-layered flattened cells; B: Immunohistochemically, the endothelial cells are positive for CD34; C: Some endothelial cells are positive for CD31; D: Some endothelial cells are positive for D2-40.

in any part of the body, but are extremely unusual in the retroperitoneum[5]. Almost all retroperitoneal hemangiomas are cavernous hemangiomas, and venous hemangioma is very rare[6].

A search was conducted in the PubMed database using the term "retroperitoneal hemangioma." The clinical characteristics of the disease in the relevant studies are shown in Table 1. Abdominal distension and pain were the two most common manifestations. In asymptomatic patients, the retroperitoneal mass was usually an incidental finding during a medical examination or emergent spontaneous bleeding. Tumors were removed entirely by means of laparoscopy or laparotomy in 13 patients who all had an uneventful recovery. However, subtotal resection was performed in one patient due to technical difficulties. Follow-up MRI seven months after surgery showed a reduction in size and no signs of recurrence.

The manifestations of retroperitoneal hemangioma are non-specific, and include abdominal pain, heartburn, dyspepsia, back pain, epigastralgia, as well as abdominal distension[4,5,7-9]. Our patient was found to have a retroperitoneal mass without symptoms during a medical examination. Routine preoperative laboratory examinations were made, including blood, urine and serum amylase tests, and
Retroperitoneal venous hemangioma

Table 1 Clinical characteristics of included literature

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ref.</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Complaints</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Treatment</th>
<th>Pathological types</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Powis and Rushton[18]</td>
<td>26 F</td>
<td></td>
<td>Abdominal swelling</td>
<td>Right abdomen</td>
<td>Total resection</td>
<td>Venous hemangioma</td>
<td>Uneventful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Igarashi and Hanazaki[6]</td>
<td>28 M</td>
<td></td>
<td>Hemangioma recurrence</td>
<td>Left lumbar</td>
<td>Total resection</td>
<td>Venous hemangioma</td>
<td>Uneventful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martin-Fernández et al[5]</td>
<td>39 NM</td>
<td></td>
<td>Heartburn and abdominal pain</td>
<td>Right abdomen</td>
<td>Total resection</td>
<td>Venous hemangioma</td>
<td>Uneventful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pérez Martin et al[4]</td>
<td>26 F</td>
<td></td>
<td>Dyspepsia and back pain</td>
<td>Left lumbar</td>
<td>Laparoscopy</td>
<td>Venous hemangioma</td>
<td>Uneventful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tseng et al[19]</td>
<td>61 F</td>
<td>NM</td>
<td>Retroperitoneum</td>
<td>Subtotal resection</td>
<td>Venous hemangioma</td>
<td>Smaller residual</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forbes[11]</td>
<td>75 M</td>
<td></td>
<td>Abdominal and back pain</td>
<td>Left retroperitoneum</td>
<td>Laparotomy</td>
<td>Cavernous hemangioma</td>
<td>Uneventful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choi and Oh[14]</td>
<td>29 F</td>
<td></td>
<td>Incidentally found</td>
<td>Right abdomen</td>
<td>Laparoscopy</td>
<td>Cavernous hemangioma</td>
<td>Uneventful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kobayashi et al[13]</td>
<td>54 M</td>
<td></td>
<td>Left flank pain</td>
<td>Left Retroperitoneum</td>
<td>Laparoscopy</td>
<td>Venous hemangioma</td>
<td>Recurrence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He et al[7]</td>
<td>38 M</td>
<td></td>
<td>Dull epigastralgia</td>
<td>Right upper quadrant</td>
<td>Laparotomy</td>
<td>Cavernous hemangioma</td>
<td>Uneventful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nakatsuka et al[8]</td>
<td>65 F</td>
<td></td>
<td>Abdominal fullness</td>
<td>Right side of uterus</td>
<td>Total resection</td>
<td>Venous malformation</td>
<td>Uneventful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hanaoka et al[10]</td>
<td>36 M</td>
<td></td>
<td>Right upper quadrant pain</td>
<td>Right retroperitoneum</td>
<td>Laparotomy</td>
<td>Cavernous hemangioma</td>
<td>Uneventful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amati et al[20]</td>
<td>20 F</td>
<td></td>
<td>Abdominal distention pain</td>
<td>Retroperitoneum</td>
<td>Laparotomy</td>
<td>Malformation</td>
<td>Uneventful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chen et al[9]</td>
<td>46 F</td>
<td></td>
<td>Right waist pain</td>
<td>Near renal pelvis</td>
<td>Laparoscopy</td>
<td>Cavernous hemangioma</td>
<td>Uneventful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laih et al[3]</td>
<td>57 F</td>
<td></td>
<td>Incidentally found</td>
<td>Right retroperitoneum</td>
<td>Laparotomy</td>
<td>Cavernous hemangiomas</td>
<td>Uneventful</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NM: Not mentioned; F: Female; M: Male.

Recurrence of hemangioma is very rare. Only one case has been reported previously[6], in a 28-year-old man who underwent resection of a left lumbar cavernous hemangioma. However, two years later, he was admitted to hospital with recurrence of the left lumbar hemangioma. Abdominal CT revealed a large retroperitoneal tumor with a papillary structure. The tumor was completely resected, and the pathologic diagnosis was retroperitoneal venous hemangioma. Moreover, no cases of malignancy arising from retroperitoneal hemangioma were reported. As a result, more attention should be paid to patients with recurrent hemangioma, and complete resection of the cyst wall of the tumor and postoperative follow-up are necessary.

There are many imaging findings are not specific, but can aid to categorize the lesion as probably benign. CT is the primary imaging method for diagnosing retroperitoneal hemangioma. Although it lacks the specificity of presentation, it is helpful in the initial identification of benign or malignant masses. Abdominal ultrasonography is also an important technique for differential diagnosis. The main imaging features of the disease in the relevant studies are shown in Table 2. Laih et al[3] reported a patient whose abdominal ultrasonography showed a heterogeneous hypoechoic mass in the right retroperitoneal cavity. Similarly, the present patient presented to our hospital with the abdominal ultrasonography result of a hypoechoic cystic mass in the right retroperitoneal cavity during a medical examination. Abdominal ultrasonography is conducive to differentiating solid and cystic masses. Furthermore, abdominal CT is a preliminary examination for hemangioma, which may reveal a hypodense mass without or with slight enhancement in the arterial phase[12,13]. For example, Choi and Oh[14] reported a patient in whom a mass with internal multiple small calcifications (phleboliths) was identified by abdominal CT, and the mass showed slightly increased enhancement. We speculated that this phenomenon was probably caused by internal phleboliths of the mass, which can occur with slight or marked enhancement. In our patient, abdominal CT revealed an enormous hypodense mass with a
regular margin and without marked enhancement in the arterial phase of enhanced CT. In addition, MRI is an alternative technique, which is especially helpful in distinguishing the surrounding soft tissue structures. The mass was hypointense on the T1-weighted image, and was hyperintense on the T2-weighted image. In our case, it was suggested that the patient should undergo further MRI examination, which revealed the retroperitoneal mass with low signal intensity on the T1-weighted image and high signal intensity on the T2-weighted image. However, accurate preoperative diagnosis of retroperitoneal venous hemangiomas is very difficult. Therefore, it is recommended that preoperative imaging be used to assess both the benignity and malignancy of the tumor and the location and proximity to organs and structures surrounding tissue structures. Surgical resection is the mainstay of treatment for retroperitoneal venous hemangioma. Even though retroperitoneal hemangioma is a benign tumor, the enlarged tumor may compress the surrounding organs and cause rupture and bleeding. In our patient, a mass approximately 20 cm was found in the right retroperitoneum following laparoscopic exploration. The tumor compressed the adjacent tissues and organs, and most importantly, the mass was firmly attached to both the wall of the second part of the duodenum and the head of the pancreas. Therefore, in order to completely remove the capsule wall of the mass and protect the surrounding organs, we chose to resect the tumor by laparotomy.

The pathological features of a venous hemangioma consist of positivity for the vascular markers CD34 and CD31, and the vascular wall contains smooth muscle and is lined with a single layer of endothelial cells[4,16,17]. In our case, microscopic examination showed that the cystic wall was lined by a single layer of flattened cells, smooth muscle cells, as well as adipose tissue. Immunohistochemistry was positive for SMA, CD34 and CD31. These findings were consistent with a typical venous hemangioma.

Although imaging has provided assistance in the diagnosis of retroperitoneal cysts, we did not focus on adhesion of the mass to the surrounding organs. Moreover, sufficient evidence to demonstrate the superiority of laparoscopy for the treatment of retroperitoneal venous hemangioma is lacking. It is suggested that the appropriate procedure should be chosen according to the patient's condition before surgery.
CONCLUSION

Venous hemangioma is a rare benign lesion in adults, and an accurate diagnosis before surgery is challenging due to non-specific manifestations, imaging features and low incidence. Retroperitoneal venous hemangiomas essentially involve no malignancy, but venous hemangiomas may grow and cause symptoms of compression as well as adhering to surrounding tissues. When symptomatic massive hemangiomas are present, surgery is considered. In addition, surgery is the curative treatment for venous hemangioma, and the definitive diagnosis relies on pathology. Attention should be paid to lesion residues after resection, and CT should be reviewed periodically during the follow-up period.

FOOTNOTES

Author contributions: Qin Y and Qiao P participated in the management of this case, collected the material of this case, and drafted the manuscript; Guan X and Zeng S contributed to the conception and design of the article; Hu XP and Wang B participated in the management of this case and were in charge of revising the manuscript; all authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Informed consent statement: A written informed consent was obtained from the patient for publication of this case report.

Conflict-of-interest statement: The authors have nothing to disclose.

CARE Checklist (2016) statement: The authors have read the CARE Checklist (2016), and the manuscript was prepared and revised according to the CARE Checklist (2016).

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Country/Territory of origin: China

ORCID number: 

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