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Unveiling The Importance Of Multilocular Radiolucencies Of Oral Cavity – A Review

[1]Dr. Sindhu M, [2]Dr. Keerthana G, [3]Dr. Mathumala Subramanian, [4]Dr.Vinoth K, [5]Dr.Sathish Kumar M

[1]Under Graduate, [2,3]Post Graduate, [4]Senior Lecturer, [5]Head of the Department

Department of Oral and Maxillofacial Pathology

Karpaga Vinayaga Institute of Dental Sciences

Chengalpattu, India

ABSTRACT:

This article examines lesions characterized by multilocular radiolucencies, essential for differential diagnosis. Key lesions include odontogenic keratocyst, ameloblastoma, central giant cell granuloma, cherubism, odontogenic myxoma, aneurysmal bone cyst, central hemangioma, and other vascular lesions. Due to varying clinical characteristics, management strategies differ. Notably, clinicians must consider vascular lesions when evaluating multilocular radiolucencies.

Key Words: Multilocular radiolucencies, Odontogenic tumors, bone lesions, Radiographic diagnosis, Ameloblastoma, Odontogenic Keratocyst

INTRODUCTION:

Multilocular radiolucencies of the jaw are characterized by multiple interconnected compartments within the bone, exhibiting a distinctive "soap bubble" or "honeycomb" appearance on radiographs. These lesions vary significantly in etiology, ranging from benign cystic lesions to aggressive neoplasms, and can arise from odontogenic, non-odontogenic, or systemic conditions.

The term "multilocular" refers to the compartmentalization within the lesion, often delineated by bony septa visible on radiographs. Accurate identification and evaluation of these lesions are crucial due to their diverse nature and potential for causing significant functional and aesthetic complications.

A multidisciplinary approach, incorporating clinical evaluation, imaging studies, and histopathological analysis, is essential for accurate diagnosis and effective management of multilocular radiolucencies of the jaw.[1]

CLASSIFICATION OF MULTILOCULAR LESIONS:

- Odontogenic Lesions

1. Ameloblastoma: Aggressive, locally destructive lesion with high recurrence rate.

2. Odontogenic Keratocyst (OKC): Aggressive, potentially malignant lesion with high recurrence rate.

3. Dentigerous Cyst: Associated with impacted teeth, can transform into ameloblastoma or OKC.

4. Calcifying Epithelial Odontogenic Tumor (CEOT): Rare, benign tumor with characteristic calcifications.

- Non-Odontogenic Lesions

1. Central Giant Cell Granuloma (CGCG): Locally aggressive, potentially destructive lesion.

2. Fibro-osseous Lesions: Group of lesions including fibrous dysplasia, cemento-osseous dysplasia, and cemento-ossifying fibroma.

3. Aneurysmal Bone Cyst (ABC): Expansile, potentially destructive lesion with fluid-filled cavities.

4. Stafne Bone Cavity: Developmental anomaly, not a true cyst or neoplasm.

- Systemic Diseases

1. Hyperparathyroidism: Brown tumors, osteitis fibrosa cystica.

2. Paget's Disease: Osteitis deformans, characterized by bone resorption and deposition.

3. Metastatic Disease: Cancers from distant sites, such as breast, lung, or prostate.[1]

CLINICAL FEATURES:

It may include

painless swelling,

cortical bone expansion,

displacement of teeth. However, aggressive lesions can cause pain, rapid growth, or pathological fractures. Differentiating between various conditions that appear similar radiographically but differ in biological behavior, treatment, and prognosis poses a diagnostic challenge.

RADIOGRAPHIC APPROACH TO MULTILOCULAR RADIOLUCENCY

Despite advances in cross-sectional imaging, radiographs remain the primary diagnostic tool for multilocular lesions. Differentiating these lesions can be challenging due to their similar radiographic appearance.

To approach the differential diagnosis of multilocular lesions, consider the following radiographic factors:

1. Location and extent of the lesion

2. Presence of osteolytic (bone-destroying) or osteoblastic (bone-forming) activity

3. Characteristics of the lesional tissue

4. Appearance of internal margins

5. Impact on supporting structures of the teeth

6. Relationship between the lesion and adjacent teeth

7. Cortical changes (e.g., thinning, expansion)

8. Presence of periosteal reactions (e.g., new bone formation, periosteal thickening)[2]

PATTERNS IN MULTILOCULAR RADIOLUCENCIES

1. Honeycomb or soap-bubble pattern: Small, uniform compartments. Examples include aneurysmal bone cyst, ameloblastoma, and central hemangioma of bone.

2. Multilocular pattern: Overlapping circular compartments of varying sizes. Examples include multilocular cyst, ameloblastoma, and central giant cell granuloma.

3. Spider or spoke pattern: Septa radiating from a central body, resembling a spider. Ameloblastoma is a classic example.

4. Tennis racket pattern: Angular compartments formed by straight septa, often triangular, rectangular, or square. Odontogenic myxoma is a notable example.

5. Scalloped or crenated pattern: Less prominent septa and a wave-like margin. Typically seen in later stages of lesions like odontogenic keratocyst and central giant cell granuloma.[3]

COMMONLY ASSOCIATED MULTILOCULAR RADIOLUCENCIES IN ORAL CAVITY :

When encountering a multilocular radiolucent lesion in the jaw, it's essential to consider several common differential diagnoses, as many lesions have similar radiographic appearances. Odontogenic keratocyst, botryoid odontogenic cyst, ameloblastoma, odontogenic myxoma, central giant cell granuloma, and central hemangioma are among the most commonly occurring multilocular lesions of the jaws. A thorough evaluation of clinical, radiographic, and histopathological characteristics is crucial for accurately distinguishing among these conditions.

1. **Odontogenic Keratocyst (OKC) :**

It is an aggressive cystic lesion originating from dental lamina remnants. It frequently appears as a multilocular radiolucency and is known for its high recurrence rate. Unlike other lesions, OKC may show minimal cortical expansion, but it can extend significantly within the jaw. Radiographically, OKC often presents with scalloped margins and multilocular areas. Histologically, the presence of parakeratinized stratified squamous epithelium is a diagnostic hallmark.[4]

2. **Central Giant Cell Granuloma (CGCG)** :

It is a benign lesion of unknown origin that commonly affects the anterior mandible. Its radiographic appearance can vary, presenting as a multilocular radiolucency with either well-defined or ill-defined borders. Clinically, CGCG may cause painless swelling or tooth displacement. Histologically, the presence of multinucleated giant cells within a fibrous stroma distinguishes it from other lesions, such as ameloblastomas or odontogenic keratocysts.[5]

3. **Odontogenic myxoma :**

It is a rare, benign tumor originating from ectomesenchymal tissue. Radiographically, it typically appears as a multilocular radiolucency with distinctive "honeycomb" or "soap bubble" patterns. Commonly found in the posterior mandible, this lesion can cause significant tooth displacement or cortical bone expansion. Due to its locally invasive nature, treatment usually involves aggressive surgical excision to prevent recurrence.[6]

4. **Aneurysmal Bone Cyst (ABC)**

It is a non-neoplastic pseudocyst featuring blood-filled spaces. Radiographically, it typically appears as a multilocular radiolucency with cortical expansion and thinning. ABCs predominantly affect younger individuals and may be associated with other lesions, such as central giant cell granulomas. A definitive diagnosis requires histopathological examination, which reveals cavernous blood-filled spaces lacking an endothelial lining.[7]

5. **Central hemangiomas**

They are rare vascular lesions that manifest as multilocular radiolucencies, predominantly in the mandible. Due to their radiographic appearance, they are often misdiagnosed as other lesions. Characteristic features include a "honeycomb" or "sunburst" pattern. Notably, central hemangiomas can lead to substantial bleeding during surgery. A definitive diagnosis typically requires angiography to confirm the vascular nature of the lesion.[8],[9]

6. **Ameloblastoma** is a common odontogenic tumor that frequently appears as a multilocular radiolucency, primarily in the posterior mandible. Although benign, it is locally aggressive, often causing significant bone expansion and resorption. Radiographically, ameloblastomas typically display a characteristic multilocular "soap bubble" or "honeycomb" pattern with well-defined margins. Due to its high recurrence rate with conservative treatment, surgical resection is usually the recommended management approach.[10],[11]

7. **Osteomyelitis** is an inflammatory condition affecting bone and bone marrow, often developing in the jaw as a result of odontogenic infections or secondary to various conditions, including systemic diseases, trauma, fractures, and radiation therapy. Radiographically, osteomyelitis may manifest in different forms, such as suppurative, sclerosing, periostitis-associated, tuberculous, and osteoradionecrosis.
Chronic osteomyelitis of the jaws primarily results from odontogenic microorganism infections, and may also arise from complications related to dental extractions, surgery, trauma, and irradiation. Typically, patients in their fifties to sixties, with a male predominance, are affected, and the posterior mandible is the most common site.
Initially, radiographs may appear normal, but as the disease progresses, characteristic features include sequestra (regions of bone destruction surrounded by radiopaque bone) and an onion-skin appearance due to periosteal new bone formation.[12]

8. **Cherubism** is a rare, inherited condition characterized by painless, bilateral, and symmetrical expansion of the jaws. Typically, symptoms begin between 2 and 5 years of age. Radiographically, cherubism appears as expansive, radiolucent, and multiloculated lesions with clear cortical boundaries. The condition usually starts in the mandible's angle and ascending ramus, progressing to the mandibular body, displacing the mandibular canal, and occasionally extending to the coronoid process. Maxillary involvement typically affects the tuberosity region, potentially infiltrating orbital cavities and causing exophthalmia and limited ocular movement.

The extent of cherubism can be classified into three grades:

Grade I: Bilateral involvement of the ascending ramus of the mandible.

Grade II: Bilateral involvement of the ascending ramus and maxillary tuberosity.

Grade III: Complete involvement of the maxilla and mandible, compromising the coronoid.

Dental complications include tooth displacement, impaction, and root resorption, resulting in a "floating tooth" appearance.[13]

9. **Hyperparathyroidism** is an endocrine disorder characterized by excessive circulating parathyroid hormone (PTH), leading to increased bone remodeling and osteoclastic resorption. Radiographically, this condition manifests as well-defined unilocular or multilocular radiolucencies in the jaws, accompanied by a ground-glass appearance of the trabecular pattern. Brown tumors, a common complication, appear as expansile osteolytic lesions, typically presenting as slight swelling in the jaw bones. The mandible is more frequently affected than the maxilla.[14]

Dental manifestations include generalized or localized loss of the lamina dura, resulting in a tapered appearance of the roots due to reduced image contrast.

DIAGNOSTIC APPROACH OF MULTILOCCULAR RADIOLUCENT LESIONS :

Multilocular radiolucent lesions of the jaw present a complex diagnostic dilemma due to their varied origins, encompassing both benign odontogenic cysts and aggressive malignant tumors. A methodical and systematic diagnostic approach is crucial for ensuring accurate diagnosis and devising effective treatment strategies.

1. CLINICAL EXAMINATION

- Patient History: Evaluating the onset, duration, and progression of symptoms through targeted questions, including:

- Presence of pain, swelling, or facial asymmetry

- Associated systemic symptoms (e.g., hyperparathyroidism in brown tumors)

- History of trauma or previous surgeries

- Physical Examination:
  - Palpation to assess swelling, tenderness, or fluctuation
  - Mucosal examination for ulcers or sinus tracts
  - Dental assessment for tooth mobility or displacement[15]

2. RADIOPRAGHIC ANALYSIS

Radiographs are essential for diagnosing multilocular radiolucencies, with key features to evaluate:

- Margins: Well-defined borders indicate benign lesions (e.g., odontogenic keratocysts), while ill-defined margins suggest aggressive lesions (e.g., ameloblastomas).
- Internal Structure:
  - "Soap bubble" or "honeycomb" patterns are characteristic of ameloblastomas or myxomas.
  - Scalloped borders are typical of odontogenic keratocysts.
- Effects on Surrounding Structures:
  - Displacement of teeth or root resorption (e.g., ameloblastoma, myxoma).
  - Cortical bone thinning or perforation (e.g., aneurysmal bone cysts).
  - Jaw expansion patterns (e.g., central giant cell granuloma or fibro-osseous lesions).

When necessary, advanced imaging modalities like CT, MRI, or CBCT provide detailed information on lesion extent, cortical involvement, and adjacent structure involvement, facilitating accurate diagnosis and treatment planning.[16]

1. Histopathological Examination

Histological evaluation is essential for definitive diagnosis, particularly for lesions with overlapping clinical and radiographic features. Biopsy is necessary to differentiate between such lesions. Characteristic histological features include:

- Ameloblastoma: Islands of ameloblastic epithelial cells resembling the enamel organ.
- Odontogenic Keratocyst: Parakeratinized stratified squamous epithelium with a corrugated surface.
- Central Giant Cell Granuloma (CGCG): Multinucleated giant cells within a fibrovascular stroma.

Incisional or excisional biopsy is performed, depending on the size and location of the lesion, to obtain a representative tissue sample for histopathological examination.[17]

2. Laboratory Investigations

Laboratory investigations play a crucial role in diagnosing lesions with systemic associations. Biochemical tests, such as serum calcium and parathyroid hormone (PTH) levels, can help identify conditions like hyperparathyroidism, which is associated with brown tumors. Additionally, alkaline phosphatase levels are elevated in Paget's disease or fibro-osseous lesions, while a complete blood count (CBC) can detect anemia related to vascular lesions.[18]

5. Specialized Imaging Techniques

In specific cases, advanced imaging modalities provide valuable insights. Angiography is utilized for vascular lesions, such as central hemangioma, to assess blood supply and plan potential embolization. Additionally, bone scintigraphy evaluates metabolic activity in fibro-osseous lesions, aiding in diagnosis and treatment planning.[19]

6 . Multidisciplinary consultation

IT is often necessary for complex cases, involving collaboration with specialists such as oral pathologists, radiologists, and maxillofacial surgeons. Additionally, aggressive or systemic conditions, like hyperparathyroidism or metastasis, may require input from endocrinologists or oncologists to ensure comprehensive management and optimal patient care.[20]

CONCLUSION

Multilocular radiolucencies of the jaw represent a diverse group of conditions, spanning benign odontogenic cysts and tumors to aggressive neoplasms and systemic lesions. Their distinctive radiographic appearance, featuring multiple interconnected compartments, necessitates meticulous evaluation to distinguish between lesions with overlapping clinical and imaging characteristics. Accurate diagnosis relies on a systematic approach, integrating patient history, clinical examination, radiographic interpretation, histopathological analysis, and advanced imaging and laboratory investigations as needed. Prompt identification and appropriate management are critical to minimize potential complications, including bone destruction, tooth displacement, and recurrence. A multidisciplinary approach, involving oral surgeons, radiologists, and pathologists, is essential for achieving accurate diagnosis and optimal treatment outcomes. Ongoing research and advancements in imaging and diagnostic techniques will further enhance management of these lesions, ultimately improving patient care and prognosis.

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