

Leiomyoma of the female urethra

A case report and review

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Summary: A case of urethral leiomyoma in a 39 year old woman is reported. It is always a benign neoplasia, frequently hormone-dependent, rarely relapsing after excision. An accurate review of the literature has found over 110 cases up to date, in opposition to a recent publication in the Journal of Urology in 1992, which reported only 36 cases up to that year.

Key words: Urethral tumors; Leiomyoma.

INTRODUCTION

Leiomyoma of the urethra is an uncommon but benign neoplasia, more frequent in women than in men, whose frequency has not really been verified.

English literature reported only 14 cases in 1979⁽¹⁾, 28 in 1988⁽²⁾ and 36 in 1992⁽³⁾. However, in our research, we have found 66 cases reported in 1988 in the Japanese literature⁽⁴⁾. In addition to the cases reported by Matsumiya⁽⁴⁾ and Cheng⁽³⁾, we have found other 11⁽⁵⁻¹⁴⁾, so that the total of leiomyomas of the urethra reported up to now is surely over 110.

Almost all the scientific contributions have appeared in urological Journals and only two in gynecological Journals

(15 and 16), thus showing the difficulty diagnosis presents to gynecologists.

CLINICAL CASE

A 39 year old woman, D.C.A. had a growing suburethral mass for over one year. The patient had been followed by an external gynecologist, who sent her to our Gynecological Department, with a diagnosis of suburethral cyst. On examination, the mass, located on the anterior wall of the vaginal lower third, appeared tough-parenchymal, with a longer longitudinal axis (about 3×2 cm) and submucosal site (Table 1, Fig. a).

We easily performed the excision of the neoplasia, which presented a clear cleavage plane both with the vaginal mucosa and with the urethral smooth muscle, to which the mass was linked only by a thin fibrous-muscular junction. The macroscopic aspect, after cutting, was that of leiomyoma (Table 1, Fig. b) and the diagnosis was confirmed by several histological sections (Table 1, Fig. c). After two years the patient shows no signs of relapse in the surgical site.

DISCUSSION

Leiomyoma of the urethra is an uncommon benign neoplasia, of which no malignant change has even been reported. Its

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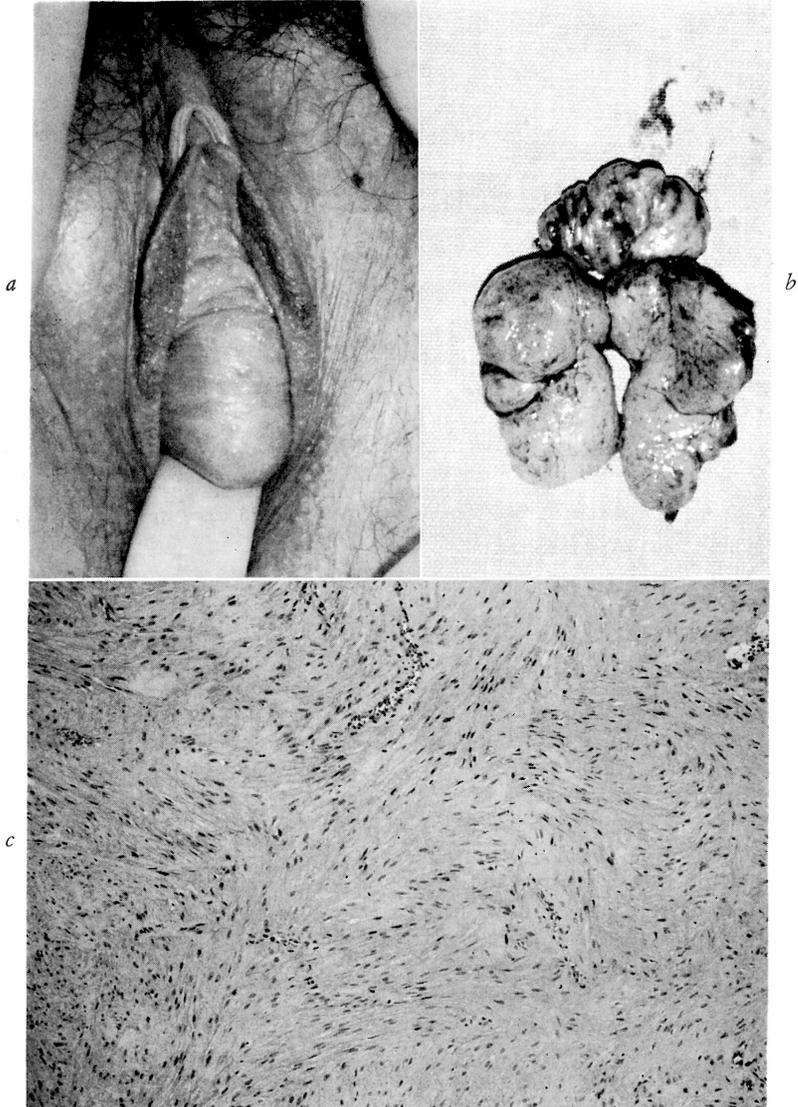


Fig. 1. — *a*) Leiomyoma of the posterior urethral wall; *b*) Macroscopic section of the leiomyoma, with the vaginal mucosa (above); *c*) Histological feature of the leiomyoma, with typical smooth muscle fibers.

etiology and pathogenesis are still unclear: it arises prevalently from the posterior urethral wall, although it may arise in any area of the urethral muscles, both in sessile and pedunculated forms. Leiomyoma may be asymptomatic for a long

time or cause dysuria, hematuria or dyspareunia, in relation to both its site and dimensions.

The average patient age at presentation is about 40 years and the neoplasia may be hormone-dependent, so that it may in-

crease in volume during pregnancy^(2, 17). From this point of view, it looks similar to the uterine leiomyoma, from which it does not differ histologically.

Treatment consist of simple excision; nevertheless relapses have been reported in three cases^(1, 18, 19).

The differential diagnosis is not always easy and, in particular, it includes urethral diverticulum, a Gardner's duct cyst or an infiltrating urethral carcinoma.

In conclusion, leiomyoma of the urethra is an uncommon benign neoplasia of uncertain etiology, whose frequency is surely underestimated (as can be observed from the wide Japanese literature), perhaps owing to lack of report of many single cases due to their minor clinical importance and their constant benignity.

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