



G13 Sudden Asphyxial Death Due to Regurgitation of a Pedunculated Esophageal Lipoma: A Case Report and Review of the Literature

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The goals of this paper are to present an unusual case of sudden death due to asphyxia by regurgitation of a pedunculated esophageal lipoma is presented, and a review of relevant literature is performed.

Of all esophageal neoplasms, 20% are benign. Benign esophageal tumors include leiomyomas, which are the most common, as well as fibromas, hemangiomas, and lipomas. Lipomas are extremely uncommon, representing approximately 4% of benign esophageal tumors. They usually present in the elderly and more commonly in men, although no other definitive risk factors have been identified. Most arise in the submucosa, and may be sessile or pedunculated. When pedunculated, the most common symptom is dysphagia, followed by a sense of fullness in the throat or respiratory symptoms such as wheezing or recurrent respiratory infections. However, the first sign may be regurgitation of a mass into the mouth following coughing, eructation or vomiting. In rare patients, the mass obstructs the oropharynx, leading to asphyxia. To date, less than ten asphyxial deaths due to regurgitation of a pedunculated esophageal tumor have been reported in the literature.

The authors present a case of a 44-year-old man with a history of seizures that suddenly collapsed after a witnessed seizure. Upon arrival at the emergency room, he was apneic. The anesthesiologist identified food and gum in the mouth, which were cleared, and a white mass was identified in the pharynx. When oral intubation was impossible, a tracheostomy was performed for airway control. Unfortunately, resuscitation efforts were unsuccessful and the patient was transferred to the medical examiner's office for examination.

At the time of autopsy, a pedunculated esophageal mass was present obstructing the oropharynx. The mass was consistent with a lipoma on gross and microscopic examination. Additional significant autopsy findings included two small cavitory lesions in the left temporal and occipital lobes of the brain, which were most likely responsible for his seizure disorder.

Although rare, pedunculated esophageal tumors are important entities to consider in patients with complaints of dysphagia or vague respiratory complaints, especially in otherwise healthy individuals. When undiagnosed, the presenting symptom may be sudden unexpected death as in this case.

Sudden Death, Asphyxia, Pedunculated Esophageal Lipoma