

Use of PET/CT and Stereotactic Radiation Therapy for the Diagnosis and Treatment of Osteosarcoma Metastases

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ABSTRACT

This case report describes the use of two new concepts in the diagnosis and treatment of metastatic osteosarcoma (OSA) in one dog. The dog was initially presented for positron emission tomography and computed tomography (PET/CT) as full-body staging following amputation and adjuvant chemotherapy for treatment of OSA of the proximal tibia. The initial PET/CT did not show evidence of metastatic disease. Six mo after OSA, diagnosis pulmonary metastatic nodules were identified and oral toceranib phosphate was initiated. Twelve mo postdiagnosis the dog developed neck pain and non-ambulatory tetraparesis and was diagnosed with a C7 vertebral metastatic lesion based on magnetic resonance imaging. A second PET/CT was performed to screen for further metastatic lesions, and a nodule within the right ischium was identified. The C7 and ischial lesions were treated with stereotactic radiation therapy (SRT). Sixteen mo postdiagnosis, a third PET/CT was performed due to increasing size of the pulmonary nodules and a right-sided liver metastasis was detected. The liver mass was treated with SRT. The PET/CT scans facilitated identification of gross metastatic lesions that were subsequently treated with SRT, which resulted in clinical improvement of the dog's neurological signs. (*J Am Anim Hosp Assoc* 2017; 53:52–58. DOI 10.5326/JAAHA-MS-6359)

Introduction

Osteosarcoma (OSA) is an aggressive primary bone tumor in dogs with a high rate of microscopic metastases at diagnosis.¹ Regular monitoring for development of metastatic disease (staging) is recommended following curative-intent treatment protocols for treatment of canine appendicular OSA. Common staging tests include thoracic radiography, thoracic or full-body computed tomography (CT), full-body nuclear scintigraphy, and abdominal ultrasonography.^{2–7} Combined positron emission tomography and computed tomography (PET/CT) is routine in the diagnosis and staging of cancer in humans.^{8,9} PET allows for non-invasive

characterization of tissue metabolism, blood flow, perfusion, and oxygenation. Limited availability precludes routine use of PET/CT in oncologic management of veterinary patients. Despite this limitation, PET/CT offers potential advantages over currently recommended staging tests, including high sensitivity of detection of metastatic lesions and allowing assessment of soft tissues and bone with full-body imaging.

Reported treatments for gross OSA metastases include pulmonary metastatectomy, fractionated radiation therapy, Samarium-153, systemic and inhalational chemotherapy, and receptor tyrosine kinase inhibitors.¹⁰ Stereotactic radiation therapy (SRT)

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CBC (complete blood count); CT (computed tomography); FDG (2-deoxy-2-[¹⁸F]fluoro-D-glucose); MWF (Monday, Wednesday, and Friday); OSA (osteosarcoma); PET/CT (positron emission tomography and computed tomography); SRT (stereotactic radiation therapy); SUV (standard uptake value); TPLO (tibial plateau leveling osteotomy)

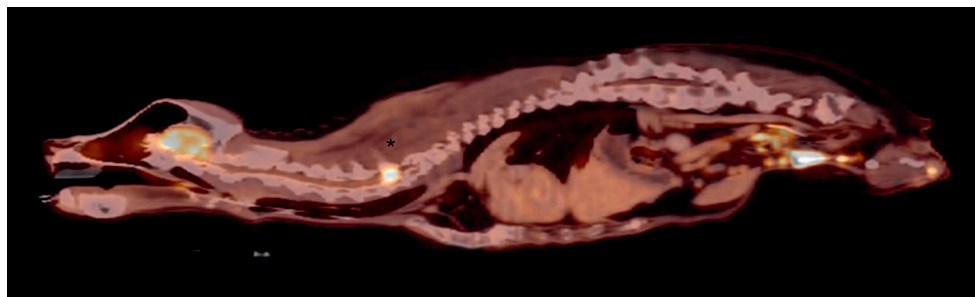


FIGURE 1 Sagittal PET/CT image of increased FDG uptake in C7 vertebral body and pedicle. The black asterisk indicates position of C7 vertebral metastatic lesion. The right ischial lesion cannot be seen on this view. Increased FDG uptake is present in the brain and urinary tract. FDG (2-deoxy-2-[¹⁸F]fluoro-D-glucose); PET/CT (positron emission tomography and computed tomography).

continuous rate infusion in combination with oral gabapentinⁿ (8.6 mg/kg *q* 12 hr), methocarbamol^o (21.4 mg/kg *q* 12 hr), and prednisolone^p (0.9 mg/kg *q* 12 hr).

A second PET/CT was performed (using the aforementioned protocol) for the purposes of both additional staging and radiation planning. The dog was positioned in sternal recumbency with the right hindlimb extended caudally in an immobilization device consisting of a bite block, thermoplastic mask, and cushion^q to ensure replicable patient positioning.¹² The PET/CT revealed an extradural, mildly osteolytic and osteoproliferative, soft tissue mass lesion in the left aspect of the C7 cervical vertebral canal (measuring 2 cm x 3 cm x 1.4 cm). The mass was hypermetabolic with an SUV_{max} of 4.5 (**Figure 1**). This lesion caused severe spinal cord compression and spinal cord displacement. An osteoproliferative and osteolytic bone lesion (2.1 cm diameter) was identified in the right ischium with a SUV_{max} of 4.5. There was a 1 cm diameter soft tissue nodule identified in the ventral aspect of the right cranial lung lobe (SUV_{max} 2.3), and a 3 mm soft tissue nodule in the dorsal aspect of the right cranial lung lobe (SUV_{max} 0.8). There were multiple 1-2 mm soft tissue to mineral attenuating foci throughout the lungs, thought to be osteomata. The leading differential diagnosis for the C7 and ischial lesions identified on PET/CT was OSA metastases. Given the high level of clinical suspicion and potential difficulty obtaining diagnostic samples, an aspirate or biopsy of the lesions was not performed. A urinary catheter was placed, as the dog was weak and non-ambulatory. SRT was planned with the palliative goals of decreasing pain associated with the C7 lesion, to prevent future pain at the ischial site, and to try to improve ambulation to maintain quality of life. The C7 lesion was treated with three fractions of SRT administered on a Friday, Monday, and Wednesday. The right ischial lesion was treated with two fractions of SRT on Monday and Wednesday. SRT was administered with a linear accelerator^r following computer-based inverse planning at treatment planning workstation^s and was

delivered with intensity modulation and image guidance (see **Table 1** for treatment details). Quality assurance was performed for each plan (using Varian's Portal Dosimetry system) by an American Board of Radiology certified medical physicist. Normal tissue constraints were applied from the American Association of Physicist in Medicine guidelines.¹³ For each radiation treatment, the dog was anesthetized as previously described. The urinary catheter was removed on the day of the second SRT treatment for the C7 lesion, oral prazosin^t was initiated (1 mg/kg *q* 8 hr), and the dog was able to voluntarily urinate. During hospitalization, the dog received repeated neurological and clinical assessments to monitor neurological status and pain control. Rehabilitation was performed three to four times daily, including passive range of motion of all joints, assisted standing, and walking. Significant improvements in the neck pain and strength were noted and the dog was ambulatory with assistance prior to discharge. The dog was discharged 2 days after the last fraction of SRT with oral methocarbamol (21.4 mg/kg *q* 12 hr), tramadol^u (2.1 mg/kg *q* 6 hr), prednisolone (0.9 mg/kg *q* 12 hr), and gabapentin (8.6 mg/kg *q* 12 hr).

One wk after discharge, pamidronate^v (1.4 mg/kg IV) was administered as a continuous rate infusion over 2 h. At this visit to a local veterinary medical oncologist, the dog was ambulatory with mild tetraparesis, and at that time the toceranib phosphate (2.35 mg/kg *per os* MWF) was reinstated. Pamidronate was repeated 1 mo later (1.4 mg/kg IV). At this visit, a small (5 mm) dermal mass was noted on the medial aspect of the right thigh, and leukopenia ($2.7 \times 10^3/\mu\text{L}$; reference range, $4.0\text{--}15.5 \times 10^3/\mu\text{L}$) was noted on CBC. A fine needle aspirate was performed, and cytologic findings suggested a mesenchymal cell tumor. The toceranib phosphate was temporarily discontinued and a punch biopsy of the nodule was performed. Histopathology of the nodule was suggestive of a mesenchymal tumor with narrow excision; although no evidence of osteoid production was seen, this was considered a likely skin metastasis. Toceranib phosphate was reinstated (2.0 mg/kg *per os*

possibly well-differentiated hepatocellular carcinomas, and the splenic nodules represented extramedullary hematopoiesis and lymphoid hyperplasia. A bile acid stimulation test performed to assess liver function was normal. Given the previous history of OSA, the right-sided liver mass was suspected to be metastatic OSA.

Three days after the PET/CT, the dog was anesthetized for a single fraction of SRT, which was delivered to the right-sided liver mass (Table 1). The anesthesia protocol and patient positioning were the same as described for the PET/CT scan. However, the dog was placed on a ventilator and atracurium^w (0.1 mg/kg IV) was administered; this allowed for management of respiratory motion during delivery of SRT (radiation dose was only administered with the patient held at maximal expiration). Following discharge, toceranib phosphate (2.1 mg/kg orally *q* MWF) and chlorambucil^x (0.13 mg/kg orally on alternating days to toceranib phosphate) were prescribed.

One mo after hepatic SRT, the dog was presented again to its local oncologist with a 4-day history of mildly decreased appetite and lethargy. Restaging with chest radiographs showed multiple soft tissue pulmonary nodules with mild increases in size of three visible pulmonary nodules. An abdominal ultrasound performed at that time showed a small amount of peritoneal effusion, with mild increase in size of the liver mass (measured 10.6 × 8.6 cm). Toceranib phosphate and chlorambucil were continued as previously prescribed.

The dog experienced worsening in appetite and lethargy and was presented to Colorado State University Veterinary Teaching Hospital (17 mo after OSA diagnosis) for euthanasia and necropsy examination. Necropsy showed disseminated metastases of OSA. The liver mass was larger (30 cm x 30 cm x 40 cm) than measured on the initial ultrasound scan (8 cm by 9 cm). The right lateral liver lobe mass was characterized by prominent central necrosis with numerous pockets containing thick, opaque, yellow exudate. Nodules of highly pleomorphic neoplastic cells multifocally infiltrated the liver and spleen. There were about 10 masses within the omentum and mesentery, and the kidneys contained three nodules (2–3 cm in diameter). Other metastatic nodules were found in the heart, lungs, adrenal, and thoracic wall. There was extensive necrosis of the neoplastic lesions in the C7 vertebra and the right ischium. Assessment of the spinal cord adjacent to the C7 lesion revealed some mild axonal swelling and some dilation of the myelin sheaths in all white matter funiculi; these changes were thought to be due to compression and not consistent with side effects from radiation therapy.

Discussion

Osteosarcoma is reported most commonly in middle-aged large breed dogs; the rottweiler breed is one of the breeds most at risk of OSA in the United States.¹⁰ Development of OSA at the site of a previous TPLO has been rarely reported in the veterinary literature.^{15,16} Appendicular OSA is a biologically aggressive tumor necessitating close monitoring for development of metastases following treatment. Recent investigations have focused on comparison of staging tests and determined that thoracic CT detected more pulmonary lesions than digital radiography but that whole body CT was not a suitable alternative to bone scintigraphy.^{2,3} PET/CT has not been reported for staging of canine OSA.

Positron emission tomography can be performed with different tracers (or radiopharmaceuticals) to allow assessment of tissue characteristics including perfusion, oxygenation, proliferation, and metabolism. FDG is a glucose analogue that is commonly used as a tracer in human oncology, as tumor cells use glycolysis to generate more than half their energy, which should result in accumulation of FDG compared to normal cells.¹⁷ However, FDG can also accumulate in non-cancerous tissues that are metabolically active, including inflammatory lesions and muscles. Standard uptake value (SUV) is a semi-quantitative measurement of the degree of FDG accumulation that is calculated using the concentration of FDG in a tissue divided by the dose of FDG injected and body weight.¹⁸ The SUV of tissues or lesions accumulating FDG has been characterized in normal dogs but has not been fully characterized in spontaneous inflammatory or neoplastic diseases, thus limiting the utility of FDG-PET with regard to definitively distinguishing neoplastic from non-neoplastic lesions.¹⁷ Given the incomplete characterization of cut-offs for SUV_{max} for malignant and benign lesions in veterinary species, any area that was hypermetabolic on PET images were thoroughly evaluated on CT. The SUV and CT characteristics were used together in this case to assess lesions leading to identification of several neoplastic and non-neoplastic lesions. PET/CT offered assessment of the entire body for detection of soft tissue or bone metastases and resulted in detection of both bone and soft tissue OSA metastases that were later confirmed by histopathology. Lesions smaller than 8 mm could potentially be overlooked by PET/CT due to the limited spatial resolution.¹⁸ Further investigation into FDG PET/CT for staging of canine OSA and the sensitivity for detection of metastases compared to other imaging modalities may be merited.

The main goal of treatment of metastatic disease in this dog was to decrease pain and recover ambulation to improve quality of life. It is well known that following development of metastatic

disease, survival times can be short (median survival time 76 days) despite treatment.¹⁹ Palliative treatments are often employed to decrease signs associated with metastatic OSA, such as pain from bone metastases. SRT is a promising option for palliative treatment to decrease local OSA metastatic progression and pain. Precise treatment delivery and a small number of fractions are required, which is of benefit when considering palliative treatments for metastatic disease. In human medicine, SRT is commonly used for inoperable head and neck sarcomas and has been reported for vertebral tumors, hepatic tumors, and brain metastases. The use of SRT for treatment of the OSA bone and soft tissue metastases has not been reported in dogs. The stereotactic radiation treatments were planned for this dog using the PET/CT scans to identify the location and extent of the metastatic lesion. SRT was successful in palliating the neurological clinical signs, including severe neck pain resulting from the C7 vertebral metastasis, and was well tolerated (only a grade I skin toxicity over the right ischium). Decreased PET avidity of the two OSA bone metastatic lesions occurred following SRT and systemic anti-neoplastic therapy. This could be consistent with decreased metabolic activity of the tumor resulting from cell death occurring due to the SRT or anti-neoplastic treatment. Multimodal treatment for metastatic disease in canine OSA may result in longer survival times due to improved palliation of the clinical signs of disease or control of disease progression. In the Boston et al. study, the dogs receiving palliative radiation and chemotherapy had significantly longer survival times than dogs receiving other treatments (including NSAID-opioids, surgery, chemotherapy, or combinations of these treatments or radiation therapy alone), but the median survival time was 130 d.¹⁹ The combination of treatments for metastatic disease used in this dog provided 1-y survival following diagnosis of metastatic disease and improved the quality of life of the dog. Further investigation of multimodal treatment for metastatic OSA and the effect on quality of life may be merited.

Conclusion

The case report highlights the potential utility of PET/CT in canine OSA for staging and facilitating treatment of suspected metastases with SRT. In addition, the report describes the use of SRT for treatment of gross OSA metastatic lesions. ■

FOOTNOTES

- ^a Carboplatin; Hospira, Lake Forest, Illinois
^b Adriamycin; Bedford Laboratories, Bedford, Ohio
^c Hydromorphone HCl; Baxter Healthcare Corp., Deerfield, Illinois
^d Atrophine sulfate; Vedco Inc., St. Joseph, Missouri
^e Propofol; Abbott Labs, North Chicago, Illinois
^f Midazolam hydrochloride; Hospira Inc., Lake Forest, Illinois

- ^g Isoflo; Abbott Labs, North Chicago, Illinois
^h Omnipaque; General Electric Healthcare Inc., Princeton, New Jersey
ⁱ Philips Gemini TF Big Bore 16-slice scanner; Philips Medical Systems Nederland B.V., Eindhoven, Netherlands
^j Palladia; Pfizer, New York, New York
^k Cyclophosphamide; Roxane Laboratories Inc., Columbus, Ohio
^l Furosemide; Vedco Inc., St. Joseph, Missouri
^m Fentanyl citrate; Hospira Inc., Lake Forest, Illinois
ⁿ Gabapentin; TEVA pharmaceuticals USA, Sellersville, Pennsylvania
^o Methocarbamol; West-Ward Pharmaceutical Corp., Eatontown, New Jersey
^p Prednisolone; Vedco Inc., St. Joseph, Missouri
^q Vac-Lok cushion; CIVCO Medical Supplies, Orange City, Iowa
^r Varian Trilogy linear accelerator; Varian Medical Systems Inc., Palo Alto, California
^s Eclipse treatment planning workstation; Varian Medical Systems Inc., Palo Alto, California
^t Prazosin HCl; TEVA Pharmaceuticals USA, Sellersville, Pennsylvania
^u Tramadol HCl; TEVA Pharmaceuticals USA, Sellersville, Pennsylvania
^v Pamidronate disodium; Hospira, Lake Forest, Illinois
^w Atracurium besylate; Hospira, Lake Forest, Illinois
^x Leukeran; Aspen Global Inc., Prasco Laboratories, Mason, Ohio

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