Case report

Asociación Española de Cooperación Internacional del Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores de España (MAE-AECI).

Competing interests: None of the authors has a financial relationship in any commercial entity that has a known interest in the subject of this manuscript.

REFERENCES


Pulmonary puzzle

ANSWER

From the question on p 359

After much discussion at the lung cancer multidisciplinary team meeting, the question was jokingly asked “what is he putting down his tracheostomy?” It transpired that the patient suffered with a dry throat from his tracheostomy. Ten years previously he read in “CLAN” (the newsletter of the National Association of Laryngectomee Clubs) that liquid paraffin would solve this. Every night before he went to bed he lay on his back and his wife put three drops of liquid paraffin down his tracheostomy. He went on to explain that he was now getting the paraffin directly from the manufacturer as they had stopped supplying it for medical use some years earlier.

The histology was reviewed confirming a diagnosis of exogenous lipid pneumonia. He was immediately advised to stop using the paraffin. On follow-up his cough gradually resolved but his chest radiograph remained unchanged. Due to a lack of established treatment options for his condition and his significant co-morbidity, further intervention was deemed inappropriate.

Exogenous lipid pneumonia results from the inhalation of oil-based substances. Mineral oil depresses the cough reflex favouring aspiration and causes include oil-based laxatives and nasal drops.1 Occupational exposure has been described in furniture factories2 and steel mills.3 Paraffin-induced lipid pneumonia as an occupational hazard of fire-eaters has also been described,4 a condition which has been coined “fire-eater’s pneumonia” or “fire-eater’s lung.”5

Cough, weight loss and dyspnoea are the most common symptoms. Radiological features vary from consolidation to nodules and ground-glass opacities. Treatment consists of removal of the offending substance. The use of corticosteroids and partial resection of the lung have been described for the treatment of endogenous lipid pneumonia due to Niemann-Pick disease but its use in exogenous cases is yet to be established.

Thorax 2008;63:376. doi:10.1136/thx.2007.076688a

REFERENCES

Pulmonary puzzle

Thorax 2008 63: 376
doi: 10.1136/thx.2007.087668a

Updated information and services can be found at:
http://thorax.bmj.com/content/63/4/376

References
This article cites 5 articles, 1 of which you can access for free at:
http://thorax.bmj.com/content/63/4/376#BIBL

Email alerting service
Receive free email alerts when new articles cite this article. Sign up in the box at the top right corner of the online article.

Topic Collections
Articles on similar topics can be found in the following collections

- Pneumonia (infectious disease) (579)
- Pneumonia (respiratory medicine) (562)
- TB and other respiratory infections (1273)
- Cardiothoracic surgery (676)
- Environmental issues (253)
- Lung cancer (oncology) (670)
- Lung cancer (respiratory medicine) (670)
- Lung neoplasms (608)
- Radiology (diagnostics) (812)

Notes

To request permissions go to:
http://group.bmj.com/group/rights-licensing/permissions

To order reprints go to:
http://journals.bmj.com/cgi/reprintform

To subscribe to BMJ go to:
http://group.bmj.com/subscribe/