Reversed halo sign in pulmonary zygomycosis

We read with interest the article ‘The atoll sign’ by Walsh and Roberton in the November issue of Thorax. The authors report a case of cryptogenic organising pneumonia with the atoll sign, also called the reversed halo sign. As mentioned by the authors, this CT sign was first described in cryptogenic organising pneumonia and was initially considered to be specific for this disease. It was subsequently reported in a variety of pulmonary diseases, including paracoccidioidomycosis (South American blastomycosis), tuberculosis, pulmonary sarcoidosis, lymphomatoid granulomatosis, Wegener’s granulomatosis, lipoid pneumonia and pneumococcal pneumonia.

We would like to highlight another important cause of the reversed halo sign: invasive pulmonary fungal infections, particularly pulmonary zygomycosis (PZ) (figure 1). In immunosuppressed patients, the presence of the reversed halo sign on CT should be considered as invasive fungal disease until proven otherwise. It is an early sign that is more frequently seen in patients with PZ than invasive pulmonary aspergillosis (IPA).

Early institution of high-dose antifungal therapy is associated with improved outcomes; therefore, early recognition of invasive fungal disease is important. Moreover, because the therapy for presumed fungal pneumonia in this population is often aimed at IPA due to its higher incidence and the preferred antifungal agent for IPA is voriconazole, which is not effective against PZ, it is important to differentiate between the two entities. The presence of the reversed halo sign can be used to optimise antifungal therapy to cover PZ.

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Competing interests None.

REFERENCES


Serum 25-hydroxy vitamin D and exercise capacity in COPD

Janssens and colleagues have recently reported that vitamin D deficiency is very common in patients affected by chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and that vitamin D status correlates with lung function. In the same issue of Thorax, Quint and Wedzicha discuss potential effects of vitamin D deficiency and supplementation.
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