Apocrine metaplasia: a new type of Müllerian metaplasia

C Allen, S Johnson

Abstract
Apocrine differentiation was an inciden-tal finding in an ovarian cyst. This is considered to be a further example of Müllerian metaplasia that has not been described before and which, theoretically, could occur in any organ of Müllerian derivation (ovary, uterus, cervix or fallopian tube). It is suggested that sites of such metaplasia could in turn be the origin of primary apocrine carcinoma in any of the above locations.

Case report
A 63 year old woman presented with a two month history of lower abdominal fullness and bloating associated with urinary frequency and hesitancy. Abdominal examination showed a large smooth mass arising from the pelvis. At laparotomy, a right ovarian tumour mass was seen. A total abdominal hysterectomy and bilateral salpingo-oophorectomy was performed. She made a good recovery and was discharged from clinic six weeks after surgery.

Discussion
Metaplasia of ovarian surface epithelium to a type of Müllerian derivation is well recognised. Five types have been described; tubal (serous); endocervical (mucinous); endometrioid; clear cell; and squamous. The forms of metaplasia are interchangeable between sites and a primary carcinoma can arise from any of them.

Apocrine metaplasia has not been reported before in any Müllerian derived epithelium including the ovary. Apocrine glandular inclusions in pelvic and abdominal lymph nodes, or in endosalpingiosis, the histogenesis of which is thought to be from Müllerian metaplasia.

Apical snouting has been described in ovarian metastases of ductal breast carcinoma, but not true apocrine differentiation as described above.

The purpose of this case report is to highlight a further type of Müllerian metaplasia which could occur in any Müllerian derivative. It is important to recognise that the entity itself is benign and should not be mistaken for metastases showing apocrine or oncocytic features. It is suggested that this type of metaplasia may give rise to a primary apocrine carcinoma in Müllerian derivatives which has yet to be described.

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