Bilateral intercostal, subscapular and teres major heterotopic ossifications in a 63-year-old male with COVID-19

Alejandra Micolich Vergara1,*, Salvatore Marsico1, Alberto Solano López1 and Flavio Zuccarino1,2

1Radiology, Hospital del Mar, Barcelona, Spain
2Cardiovascular Radiology, Hospital Sant Joan de Déu, Barcelona, Spain
*Correspondence address. Alejandra Micolich Vergara, Radiology, Hospital del Mar, Passeig Marítim de la Barceloneta, 25, 29, Barcelona, 08003, Spain.
Tel: +34-93-248-30-00; Fax: +34-93-248-32-54; E-mail: amicolichv@gmail.com

A 63-year-old male with a history of obesity and hypertension, presented to the emergency department with fever and progressive shortness of breath.

Upon arrival he was in hypoxemic respiratory failure, the chest X-ray showed bilateral patchy ground glass opacities and a RT-PCR test (reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction) confirmed coronavirus disease of 2019 (COVID-19) pneumonia.

He developed an acute respiratory distress syndrome and was admitted to the intensive care unit where he spent 134 days hospitalized, requiring invasive mechanical ventilation.

Initial thoracic-CECT (contrast-enhanced computed tomography) scan revealed diffuse involvement of pulmonary parenchyma with ground-glass opacities, consolidations and areas of crazy-paving pattern.

A follow-up thoracic-CECT, performed 5 months after admission because of the absence of respiratory improvement, depicted the appearance of multiple bilateral hyperdense linear and nodular images located in the soft tissue around the intercostal, subscapular and teres major muscles (Fig. 1a and 1b).

These radiological findings are highly suggestive of heterotopic ossifications (HO).

Given the patient’s severe clinical context, a histopathological confirmation was not feasible.

There are few cases described in the literature of chest wall myositis ossificans (MO; [1–3]) and, recently, two case reports of periarticular HO in COVID-19 patients have been described [4, 5].

The term MO is widely used but somehow inappropriate because the ossification is not originated within the striated muscle fibers but from the interstitial connective tissue, so the most suitable terminology is HO [1, 4, 5].

The most frequent presentation of HO is secondary to musculoskeletal trauma, surgery or burns but it can also develop spontaneously in relation to prolonged immobilization within the setting of critical care units [4, 5, 6].

To our knowledge, this is the first case of bilateral intercostal, subscapular and teres major HO in a COVID-19 hospitalized patient.
Further investigation is needed to reveal the real incidence of this condition and to understand the relationship between COVID-19 and HO development.

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REFERENCES

GUARANTOR
Salvatore Marsico.