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IMAGES IN EMERGENCY MEDICINE

Sister Mary Joseph's nodule

A 23 year old man visited the emergency department because of the abdominal fullness that had been bothering him for several months. The associated symptoms included intermittent tenesmus, frequent defecation, and anorexia. During physical examinations, a bluish and firm nodule was palpable over the umbilicus (fig 1).

Computed tomography scan of the abdomen showed intra-abdominal carcinomatosis with an umbilical metastatic nodule (fig 2). Fine needle aspiration of the nodule revealed desmoplastic small round cell tumour.

“Sister Mary Joseph's nodule” was named in recognition of Sister Mary Joseph—a first assistant to Dr William Mayo in the early days of Mayo Clinic.¹ The most common origin of the metastatic nodule was gastrointestinal cancer, followed by gynaecologic cancer and thoracic cavity. Since the prognosis is extremely poor, with a mean survival of only a few months, surgery is usually not indicated. Meticulous physical examination is required in order to avoid any misdiagnosis.

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Figure 1 Photo of nodule

Figure 2 Computed tomography scan of the abdomen