CLINICAL SNAPSHOT

Sister Mary Joseph Nodule

A 44-year-old man presented with a painless umbilical nodule 2 cm in diameter (*Figure*). The nodule had first come to his attention 2 months previously and had been getting progressively larger. The patient reported that he had been suffering from primarily biliary cholangitis for 2 years. Histopathological examination of a biopsy sample showed adenocarcinoma. Subsequent investigations identified the presence of metastasized cholangiocellular carcinoma. Despite swift commencement of chemotherapy, the patient died of his disease. Sister Mary Joseph Dempsey (1856–1939), a nun working as a nurse, repeatedly observed the rare phenomenon of umbilical metastasis and reported it to her departmental head physician W.J. Mayo, one of the founders of the Mayo Clinics. He then published a description of the association in 1928. In most cases the umbilical cutaneous metastasis termed Sister Mary Joseph nodule arises from a gastrointestinal tumor, less frequently from a genitourethral tumor. The metastasization usually occurs via an interface of the deep and superficial lymph drainage pathways with the skin of the umbilicus.

Dr. med. Jan-Malte Placke, Emmanouil Gratsias, Prof. Dr. med. Joachim Dissemond, Klinik für Dermatologie, Universitätsklinikum Essen, Jan-Malte.Placke@uk-essen.de

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