



Letter to the editor

Endometriosis causing very high early first trimester serum CA 125 levels

J.H. Check*^a, M.D. Hornstein^b

^a*The University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey, Robert Wood Johnson Medical School at Camden, Cooper Hospital/University Medical Center, Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Division of Reproductive Endocrinology and Infertility, Camden, NJ, USA*

^b*Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Brigham and Women's Hospital, Harvard Medical School, Boston, MA USA*

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Very high serum CA 125 levels in women have been associated with ovarian carcinoma [1]. However, an elevation of serum CA 125 has also been associated with benign conditions, e.g. endometriosis [2]. Serum CA 125 levels >1000 U/ml have been reported in patients with endometriosis [3]. Thus, more important for the diagnosis of ovarian cancer may be the ultrasound documentation of an ovarian mass with a rapidly rising serum CA 125 level.

We evaluated one such patient, a 39-year-old presenting with a complex cystic structure in the left adnexa measuring 28 × 22 × 30 mm using transvaginal sonography. A CA 125 level was increased at 368 U/ml. Though a laparoscopy was arranged, she conceived prior to the scheduled procedure which was deferred to the second tri-

mester. Initially there were fears that this mass may well be a carcinoma because of a rapid rise of the CA 125 to 1060 U/ml when the β -human chorionic gonadotropin level was 956 mIU/ml. However, because the mass did not increase in size and the serum CA 125 dropped to 392 U/ml during the second trimester the laparoscopy was cancelled. An amniocentesis revealed a normal 46XX female. Six weeks after delivering a full-term 3436-g female baby and the complete disappearance of the cyst the patient finally had a laparoscopy: two endometriotic implants at the junction of the serosa reflection of the uterus and posterior cul-de-sac's peritoneum were ablated using laser.

CA 125 levels rising above 1000 U/ml are rare in non-neoplastic conditions [3]; also uncommon, but previously reported, were two cases where the serum CA 125 levels increased >1000 U/ml during the first trimester but these two cases aborted secondary to chromosomal abnormalities [4]. The case described herein illustrates several points: (1)

* Corresponding author, 7447 Old York Road, Melrose Park, PA 19027, USA; Tel: +1 215 6354400; Fax: +1 215 6355069.

a rapid rise of CA 125 even with an apparent ovarian complex mass does not necessarily indicate ovarian tumor and this can be associated with endometriosis; (2) though pregnancy itself is known to be associated with a rise of CA 125 during the first trimester, the presence of an already elevated baseline may be considerably exaggerated by the pregnancy; and (3) not all pregnancies associated with serum CA 125 levels >1000 U/ml are associated with chromosomal abnormalities.

References

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