CASE REPORT

Avulsion fracture of xiphoid process

H. Alagha*, F. Heyes

Department of Accident and Emergency, Rotherham District General Hospital, Rotherham, UK

Accepted 23 November 2004

Introduction

Avulsion fractures are very commonly seen in limb injuries, usually resulting from a force pulling the tendons or ligaments which avulses the bone at its attachment. We report an unusual case of avulsion fracture of the xiphoid process.

Patient

A 53-year-old gentleman presented to Accident and Emergency complaining of epigastric pain and a lump over the epigastrium.

He had no previous cardiac or gastrointestinal history. He stated that pain occurred suddenly while he was using a winding gear. The winding gear jammed on the down stroke and he immediately felt a pain. He described this as a dull ache with no radiation, worse on movement, inspiration and palpation. He denied any direct trauma to the chest or shortness of breath, palpitations, nausea or heartburn.

On examination, the patient had localised severe tenderness over the xiphoid process, with no other findings in the chest or the abdomen.

An anteroposterior (AP) and lateral chest X-rays were performed, the AP was normal, but the lateral view showed a fractured xiphoid process. (Fig. 1) ECG was normal.

No specific treatment was given other than analgesia. By 9 months, he reported a gradual resolution of his symptoms over 3 months. He retains a residual bony hard lump, approximately 1–2 cm in size, at the base of the xiphisternum, which is no longer tender.

* Corresponding author.
E-mail address: hazemalagha@hotmail.com (H. Alagha).
Conclusion

Extreme tension on the abdominal wall muscles can cause a force powerful enough to pull the xiphoid process causing an avulsion fracture. A literature search has revealed no other such cases.