Desirables for the Image of the Month or Case Report

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What are we looking for? The monthly section of the Journal of Thoracic Oncology that is dedicated to an image or case is based on the belief that, although limited, there is clinical and academic value to the report of a single patient's experience. I suspect we have all been struck by the picture is worth a thousand words effect of an abnormality on physical exam or a radiographic image. Similarly, there is still value as well as intrigue to a unique case report, even if it might not be broadly applicable within an evidence-based approach to patient care. Recognition of a single patient's experience in clinical medicine may be the first step to a yet unreported frequent occurrence and prospective analysis of a phenomenon. There is merit, enjoyment, and even fun to brief and clear presentation of such images and cases, and these are goals of this section.

An appropriate entry for the image of the month is a story that is best told with a picture. It requires visual representation of an abnormality that is readily apparent or that only requires minimal explanation. More than one image may be used if it is necessary for the readers' understanding or if it provides the element of change with time. The image should involve an issue appreciable by a broad audience and should not be of interest to just a few within a specialty. The image should be supported with a few paragraphs of text that serve to set up the clinical situation, explain the image, and describe its intrigue as well as its frequency, if known. Up to three or four references from the literature are desired, and they should be noted within the text. The presentation may be designed as an unknown or as a visual quiz for the reader. Examples of images that have worked particularly well include the somewhat whimsical observation of the invisible nature of the heart on chest radiograph after left pneumonectomy,1 and the striking sight of bilateral choroidal metastasis from mesothelioma.2

An entry appropriate for the case of the month is a description of a patient presentation, problem, or response that is best done in words rather than with an image. Key is the succinct description of how and why the patient is unique or unusual. Images may be included. Similar previous reports in the literature should be referenced, with up to five or six references provided within the text of several paragraphs, but exhaustive review of the literature is unnecessary. Description of clinical context and relevance is desired, though news of the bizarre is also appreciated. Examples of effective cases include the resection of an isolated hepatic metastasis from non-small cell lung cancer,3 and the diagnosis of neoplasm made by ultrasound-guided bronchoscopic needle biopsy through the pulmonary artery.4

This venue may be a stepping stone in the academic experience of publication for one in fellowship, or it may be a pathway for a busy clinician to share observations when he or she may not have the support for pursuing a larger series or study. For best image reproduction, please carefully follow the directions for image submission on the Web instructions. We welcome your submissions.

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