

28th Annual Meeting of the European Musculo-Skeletal Oncology Society 16th EMSOS Nurse and Allied Professions Group Meeting

April 29th - May Ist 2015 Athens, Greece



PP-113

Unusual cases of extra-articular diffuse giant cell tumor of the tendon sheath

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The diffuse type of giant cell tumor of the tendon sheath or pigmented villonodular synovitis (PVNS) shows extensive involvement of the synovial membrane and capsule is often intra-articular and infiltrative. However the extra-articular diffuse type, unlike its intra-articular counterpart, is unusual and it is often misdiagnosed. The tumors are slow growing with atypical presentation, difficult differential diagnosis and higher local recurrence rate. Therefore, close follow-up is recommended after tumor excision.

We present 2 cases of extra-articular diffuse variant giant cell tumor of the tendon sheath. One was located at the elbow of a 68-year-old woman and the second at the dorsum of the foot of a 56-year-old man. The patients presented with a palpable mass. MRI showed an ill-defined extra-articular mass with low signal intensity on both T1- and T2-weighted images that may involve and erode the bone. Marginal excision was done; histological sections confirmed the diagnosis of extra-articular giant cell tumor. No adjuvant therapy was administered. At the last follow-up, 24 months after diagnosis and treatment, none of the patients experienced local recurrence of their tumors.