

More than meets the eye: nasal extranodal T-cell lymphoma mimicking preseptal cellulitis

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ABSTRACT

Extranodal T-cell lymphoma, nasal type, is a rare form of non-Hodgkin lymphoma, particularly uncommon when it involves the orbit. This study describes a case of previously treated nasal extranodal T-cell lymphoma presenting with unilateral painless eyelid swelling resembling preseptal cellulitis. A 53-year-old female with a history of nasal extranodal T-cell lymphoma presented with painless right eyelid swelling for two weeks. Initially managed as preseptal cellulitis with antibiotics, her condition did not improve despite treatment. Imaging revealed an enlarging lesion in the right nasal cavity extending into the orbit and sinuses. Nasal endoscopy confirmed a polypoidal mass, and biopsy results indicated recurrent extranodal T-cell lymphoma. The patient was promptly referred for chemotherapy, resulting in a significant reduction of the nasal mass on follow-up imaging. This case underscores the diagnostic challenge posed by nasal extranodal T-cell lymphoma, which can mimic more benign conditions like cellulitis. The clinical presentation, initially suggestive of cellulitis with eyelid swelling and erythema, did not respond to standard antibiotic therapy, prompting further investigation. Imaging played a crucial role in identifying the extent of orbital involvement and guiding subsequent management. This case highlights the importance of considering unusual presentations of lymphomas, especially in patients with a prior history, when symptoms do not align with expected outcomes of common conditions like cellulitis. Timely recognition and appropriate referral for specialised treatment are essential in managing such atypical manifestations of lymphoma.