A case of a congenital tongue base cyst presenting with stridor and respiratory distress in an infant

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Introduction

Congenital tongue base cysts are one cause of airway obstruction but are quite uncommon. A tongue base cyst may be totally asymptomatic but they can also cause stridor or respiratory distress through mass effects on the hypopharynx and by displacing the epiglottis, even resulting in death by asphyxia. Endoscopic laryngoscopy and CT or MRI are necessary for diagnosis. Most patients with tongue base cysts show improved symptoms after surgical resection.

This rare case involved a congenital tongue base cyst in an infant.

Case Report

A one-month-old girl presenting with recorrent episodes of cyanosis, dyspnea and stridor worsen during feeding, crying and in cases of agitation following birth was referred to our hospital.

Evaluation by Pneumology department with bronchoscopy tongue base cyst and a suspicion of laryngomalacia.

Under general anaesthesia → endoscopic marsupialization of the tongue base cyst and supraglottoplasty with the section of aryepiglotical folds

Histopatologically → mucus retention cyst

After treatment → symptoms improved
Discharge only with mild stridor after feeding
One month after → adequate weight gain and no recurrence

Conclusions

The tongue base cysts often are not diagnosed and can cause the death of the child. The possibility of a tongue base cyst should be considered in cases of upper airway obstruction in infants.