

Bilateral Mixed Laryngocele

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ABSTRACT

Laryngocele is a rare, benign dilatation of the laryngeal saccule that may extend internally into the airway or externally through the thyrohyoid membrane. The incidence of laryngocele is 1 per 2.5 million people per year. It may be asymptomatic or sometimes may present with cough, hoarseness, stridor, sore throat and as a swelling on one or both sides of the neck. We are reporting a case of bilateral mixed laryngocele in a 41 years old male, its clinical presentation and investigations along with a review of literature.

Keywords: Laryngocele, Saccule, Neck swelling, Computed, Tomography.

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INTRODUCTION

The laryngeal ventricle of Morgagni is normally a small elliptical recess located between the false cords above and true vocal cords below. The anterosuperior aspect of this recess ends in a blind pouch, which is called the appendix of the ventricle of Morgagni or saccule. A laryngocele is an abnormal saccular dilatation of the appendix of the laryngeal ventricle of Morgagni. It forms an air sac lined with pseudostratified ciliated columnar epithelium, which maintains its communication with the ventricle by means of a narrow stalk.¹

Laryngocele is of three types namely internal, external and combined or mixed, according to its relationship with the thyrohyoid membrane.² Internal laryngocele is one that is located medial to the thyrohyoid membrane and usually compresses the false vocal cords causing hoarseness or airway obstructive symptoms. External laryngocele extends through the thyrohyoid membrane, presenting as cervical mass and mixed (most common) laryngocele presents with both the internal and external components with their respective symptoms. An external laryngocele does not occur without an internal component.³

Usually, laryngocele is unilateral and combined. They may present at any age, but are most commonly seen in the 5th -6th decade.⁴ It is more frequent in men than in women with a ratio of 5 to 1.⁵ Although very rare, bilateral presentation of laryngocele has been reported.^{6,7}

CASE REPORT

A 41-year-old male working in police department presented to ENT OPD with a 2 years history of hoarseness of voice

and swelling left side of neck which had slowly increased in size. It was associated with forceful speaking and feeling of foreign body sensation with continuous throat clearing. There were no complaints of cough, sore throat, dyspnea, stridor, throat pain, necessity of persistently swallowing the secretions and difficult neck movements. History of smoking was present for the past 20 years (2-3 cigarettes/day). There was no past history of laryngeal problems, neck infections or laryngeal surgery.

The general physical examination of the patient was normal. Otolaryngological examination revealed a painless rounded cystic swelling on left side of neck, in front of upper one third of the anterior border of sternocleidomastoid and below the angle of mandible, measuring about 4 × 5 cm in size with normal overlying skin. It was manually reducible and increased in size on coughing and on valsalva. Conduction of vibrations during speech was also present. Indirect laryngoscopic examination revealed a bulge at the level of left false cord, rest of the larynx and vocal cords were normal.

Patient was advised plain X-ray soft tissue neck antero-posterior and lateral views. The X-ray revealed large air filled lesions in bilateral paralaryngeal locations extending beyond the hyoid bone on both sides. No air fluid level was noticed within the lesions and no abnormal prevertebral shadow was seen (Fig. 1).

Ultrasonography of neck showed air filled cavities on both sides with reverberation artifacts (Fig. 2).

Noncontrast-enhanced computed tomography (NCCT) showed large well defined air filled lesions in both the paraglottic spaces that were seen extending beyond the hyoid bone on both the sides, dissecting the thyrohyoid membranes. The left one was larger than the one on right side and was seen to displace the left submandibular gland anteriorly and left sternocleidomastoid posteriorly. No internal fluid level was noticed inside the lesions on either side. No mucosal abnormality or thickening or irregularity was noted. No enlarged cervical lymph node was seen (Fig. 3).

Patient was advised surgical excision of the symptomatic laryngocele which was on the left side but refused the same. Patient was then advised follow-up after 1 month to reconsider his decision regarding surgery.

DISCUSSION

The first description of laryngocele was provided in 1829 by Dominique Larrey, who as a surgeon of the Napoleon army in Egypt noticed the occurrence of elastic bulging on the



Fig. 1: X-ray soft tissue neck AP, lat showing bilateral air filled lesions in paralaryngeal location below level of hyoid bones

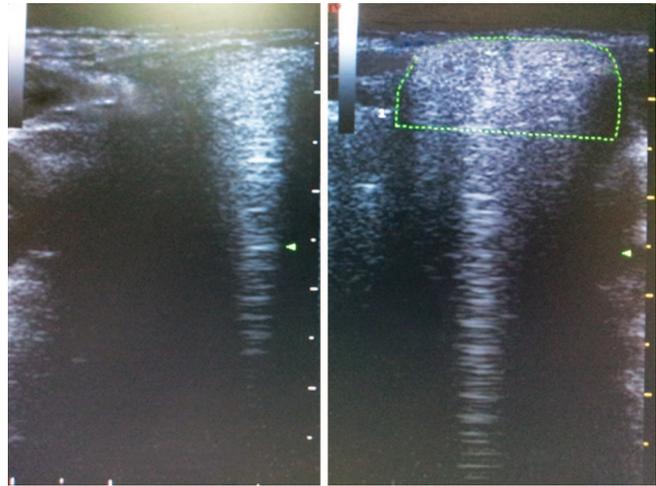


Fig. 2: Ultrasound images of bilateral paralaryngeal neck swellings showing dirty posterior acoustic artifacts that suggested air filled lesions on ultrasound

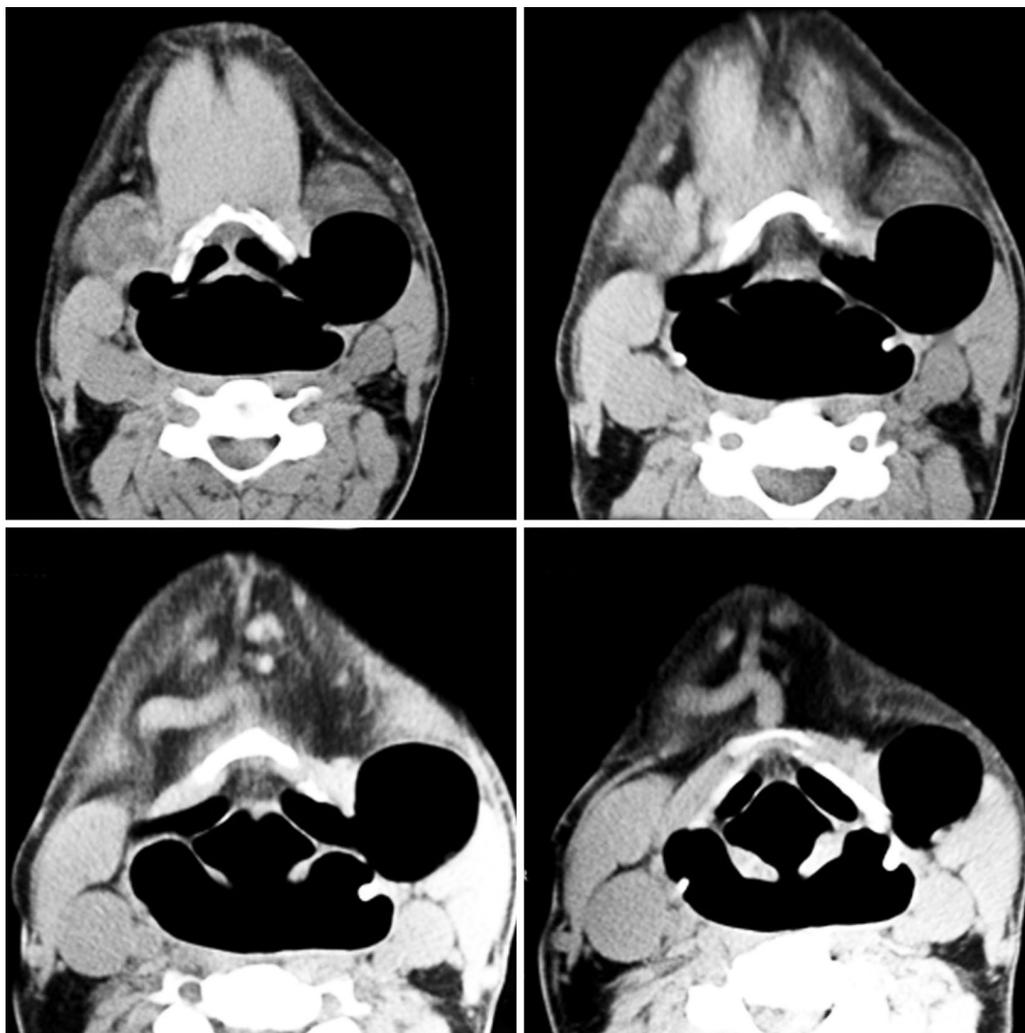


Fig. 3: NCCT axial images of neck below the level of hyoid showing bilateral mixed laryngoceles; left larger than right. No fluid level or mucosal abnormality was noticed

necks of Egyptian street tub-thumpers, blind Koran singers and soldier's drill instructors. However, Virchow, in 1867, was the first to call this abnormal dilation of the laryngeal ventricle a laryngocele.

Laryngocele may be congenital or acquired and occur at any age. Laryngocele has been reported to be five to seven times more frequent in males, with a peak incidence in the sixth decade of life.¹ The estimated incidence of laryngocele

is 1 per 2.5 million people per year. Eighty-five percent of laryngoceles have been found to be unilateral without any right or left side predominance.²

The etiology is unknown and unclear,⁸ but there is an interrelation between a congenital predisposition – represented by a large ventricular appendix,⁹ e.g., a congenital laryngocele which causes respiratory distress in a newborn¹⁰ and other postnatal acquired factors, for instance, laryngeal papillomatosis in a child.⁹ An acquired laryngocele may develop when the laryngeal ventricle becomes functionally obstructed as a result of an increase in intraglottic pressure, such as that caused by excessive coughing, playing a wind instrument, glass blowing,^{8,11-13} after performing Valsalva manoeuvre¹⁴ or using ventricular phonation during speech.¹¹

Laryngocele may extend internally into the airway or externally through the thyrohyoid membrane,¹¹ so it may present as internal, external or mixed internal and external laryngocele.¹⁵⁻²¹ It may be unilateral (uncommon)^{8,11,15} or bilateral (rare).^{11,16,19}

Laryngocele may be asymptomatic and incidentally discovered through radiographic studies for unrelated symptoms.^{6,8,11} The main symptoms, at presentation, are: airway obstruction,^{13,17,20} increasing stridor,^{12,18} hoarseness,^{12,18-21} sore throat, cough, pain, snoring, globus sensation¹² or a visible or palpable mass in the neck.^{5,14,19,20}

Internal laryngocele presents with hoarseness of voice, dyspnea and sensation of foreign body. On indirect laryngoscopy a swelling/fullness of false vocal cords and aryepiglottic fold region with normal overlying mucosa is seen. External laryngocele presents as a mass evident in the lateral aspect of the neck, which is round or ovoid, soft, elastic, moveable, painless and covered with normal skin. It decreases in size by gentle palpation and pressure as the air escapes in the larynx. Mixed laryngocele produces the subjective symptoms of internal laryngocele and the objective signs of an external laryngocele. Almost pathognomonic of the mixed type of laryngocele is the rapid, sudden worsening of symptoms, especially dyspnea following compression of the external component. The passage of air from the external to the internal part of the sac results in sudden enlargement of internal component of laryngocele and it may cause acute upper airway obstruction.^{1,2,4,5}

Serious forms of clinical emergency requiring tracheotomy may occur.^{13,20} There is a rare, but well-documented, association of laryngocele with laryngeal carcinoma.^{6,15,19,21} Therefore, if a laryngocele is detected clinically or radiologically, a carcinoma must be taken into consideration and appropriate tests be performed.¹⁶

The diagnosis of laryngocele is essentially a clinical one. Plain X-ray soft tissue neck in anteriorposterior and lateral

views are of value, especially if the Valsalva maneuver is performed. Ultrasonographic examination of neck is also useful. Computed tomography provides a cross-sectional image and superior contrast resolution and has replaced many conventional techniques and has become the initial radiographic method of evaluating the larynx and neck. It is also useful investigation in cases with suspicion of concomitant laryngeal pathology. Uncomplicated laryngocele appear on CT as air filled structures lying in the para-laryngeal space (internal), lateral neck (external) or in both locations (mixed). Magnetic resonance imaging, because of its multiplanar capability provides high definition of soft tissues, offers detailed information on the boundaries of the air-filled sac and, is useful when laryngomucocele or laryngopyocele are suspected. MRI is also helpful to distinguish obstructed mucus and inflammation from neoplastic disease.²²⁻²⁴

Differential diagnosis includes saccular cyst, branchial cyst, neck abscess and lymphadenopathy. Saccular cysts do not communicate with the laryngeal lumen, and it is usually filled with fluid.^{1,4}

Treatment of laryngocele is surgical. External surgery is preferred for large or external laryngocele, while endoscopic resection is favored for small, internal laryngocele. External approach provides an excellent exposure during the dissection of the plane between the neck of laryngocele and surrounding paraglottic tissue. Further this approach offers less recurrence rate, minimal morbidity and negligible complications.^{21,25,26} Endoscopic resection with CO₂ laser is the treatment of choice in patients with internal laryngocele. It requires lesser operation time and causes minimal damage to the endolarynx and vocal folds. The quality of voice and swallowing functions can be preserved.^{21,26}

The mixed laryngocele can be completely removed via an external cervical approach, however a combined external and endoscopic laser approach to ensure complete removal of the mixed laryngocele has been advocated.^{14,25,26}

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