Rectal carcinoid tumor: a delayed localized recurrence 23 years after endoscopic resection

Rectal carcinoid tumors are rare representing approximately 2% of rectal malignancies [1]. While treatment approaches vary and can include endoscopic or surgical resection, small (<1 cm) carcinoid tumors have extremely low rates of local recurrence and metastasis [1–3]. Our case is the first describing a delayed recurrence of rectal carcinoid tumor more than 20 years after initial endoscopic resection. A 67-year-old man presented for surveillance colonoscopy with a history of rectal carcinoid tumor. He had undergone endoscopic resection of a 4 mm rectal carcinoid tumor 5 cm from the anal verge 23 years earlier (Fig. 1). Three surveillance colonoscopies since resection were negative for residual carcinoid tissue. Recent colonoscopy showed a scar in the rectum with a 5-mm raised area (Fig. 2), which was resected via snare cautery polypectomy. Pathology was consistent with rectal carcinoid tumor (Fig. 3 and Fig. 4). Immunohistochemical stain for synaptophysin was positive; chromogranin was negative (Fig. 5). Less than 1% of cells stained positive for Ki-67, indicative of a low proliferative rate and metastatic potential (Fig. 6) [4]. Flexible sigmoidoscopy 3 months later showed no recurrence.

Rectal carcinoids are well-differentiated hindgut neuroendocrine tumors and are the most common location for colorectal carcinoids [1–3, 5]. Hindgut tumors typically display a trabecular growth pattern whereas midgut tumors usually show a nested pattern [5]. As in our case, the majority are found incidentally during endoscopic screening [1–3]. Lesions less
than 1 cm have very low rates of metastasis and local recurrence, and endoscopic resection via polypectomy or endoscopic mucosal resection is appropriate [1–3]. Our case demonstrates that delayed recurrence of rectal carcinoid tumors can occur decades later in lesions with low mitotic rates and also highlights the importance of vigilant assessing and sampling the scar site for suspicious tissue via biopsy or polypectomy, even years after resection.

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