

## The Swelling of the External Ear in an Old Woman

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**Abstract** : Relapsing chondritis is a rare disease characterized by the swelling of cartilaginous structures, including the external ear and nose. We diagnosed an old woman who developed external ear swelling with relapsing chondritis. After she was given steroid therapy, the swelling of the external ear was disappeared. Dyspnea due to the airways obstruction sometimes occurs in patient with this disease, and a careful diagnosis is necessary to ensure the proper treatment.

**Key words** : Auricular chondritis, Relapsing chondritis, Dyspnea

A 75-year-old woman had a low-grade fever and arthralgia in bilateral wrists and MP joints for two months. She was suspected to have rheumatoid arthritis. Her clinical manifestations were arthralgia and a swelling of her left auricular cartilage (Fig. 1). The value of C-reactive protein was increased to 8.9mg/dl. Her erythrocyte sediment rate was 135mm/hr. Anti-nuclear antibody and specific anti-bodies were negative. A biopsy of the left external ear was performed. The

specimen showed the necrosis of the cartilage tissue and fibrosis, and we diagnosed as relapsing polychondritis. The treatment with 1mg/kg/day of prednisolone therapy was started. The swelling of the left auricular cartilage and arthralgia were gradually disappeared (Fig. 2).

Relapsing polychondritis is a rare, long-lasting, potentially life-threatening disorder characterized by recurrent inflammatory episodes affecting the cartilaginous structures of the external ears, nose, larynx, and bronchial tree,



Fig.1



Fig.2

**Fig. 1.** The swelling of the left external ear

**Fig. 2.** The ear after steroid therapy

sometimes leading to their destruction<sup>1), 2), 3)</sup>. Severe respiratory failure resulting from permanent stenosis or expiratory collapse secondary to tracheobronchomalacia of both may lead to death, therefore, special attention should be paid to correctly diagnose this disease.

### References

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