

Pancreatic Imaging

A Pattern-Based Approach
to Radiologic Diagnosis
with Pathologic Correlation

Atif Zaheer · Elliot K. Fishman
Meredith E. Pittman · Ralph H. Hruban
Editors

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*To my parents for the inspiration,
my wife for her undying support,
my sons Asad and Ali for making it all worthwhile,
and all pancreatologists, past, present, and future*

A.Z.

*To Max Saul Zember and my hope for his most
promising future to help lead the next generation in
discovery and wonder*

E.K.F.

To all of my pathology teachers

M.E.P.

*To the next generation of talented radiologists,
including our dear Mila*

R.H.H.

Preface

Case-based teaching has been a tradition in radiology education and continues to be a popular format for radiologists-in-training and practicing radiologists alike, as it mirrors radiology practice. A myriad of pathologies with distinctive imaging findings can be seen in the pancreas, and it is only natural to compile them based on their radiologic appearances. The integration of gross pathology into the teaching of radiology helps visualize the anatomic basis for radiologic changes. The pattern-based approach presented here allows the reader to use this book as a reference in their daily practice and to tackle cases based on their radiographic appearance on CT and MRI, to formulate a differential diagnosis, and to integrate the imaging findings with the gross pathology findings and the clinical context. Each case is presented as an unknown with a brief history, followed by a description of the imaging findings, differential diagnosis, discussion of salient points of the entity and its appearance on imaging, and ultimately a teaching point.

The entire spectrum of pancreatic pathology from anatomic variants to inflammation and to common, uncommon, and rare malignancies is covered in this book. This book is organized in two main sections comprising pancreatic parenchymal and ductal disease for easy navigation and reading. It is further subdivided into sections in which each entity is categorized based on enhancement pattern, solid or cystic nature, calcification, and focality.

The collection of cases in this book draws from the long experience gathered at Johns Hopkins over many years. Most of these cases are reminiscent of the lengthy discussions at the multidisciplinary conferences religiously held at Johns Hopkins. The cases ultimately provide the essence of the debates held between the radiologists, pathologists, gastroenterologists, oncologists, and pancreatic surgeons. We hope that we have been able to represent the expertise and passion of these physicians in the field of pancreatology, creating a valuable resource and an efficient reference for radiologists-in-training, practicing radiologists, and clinicians interested in imaging to provide the very best medical care.

Atif Zaheer
On behalf of the co-editors and authors

Contents

Part I Parenchymal Abnormalities: Focal Hypoenhancing Mass

Case 1: Pancreatic Adenocarcinoma with Upstream Textural Changes	3
Stephanie Coquia	
Case 2: Pancreatic Adenocarcinoma with Superimposed Acute Pancreatitis	7
Stephanie Coquia	
Case 3: Pancreatic Adenocarcinoma, Unresectable	11
Stephanie Coquia	
Case 4: Pancreatic Adenocarcinoma, Borderline Resectable	15
Stephanie Coquia	
Case 5: Pancreatic Adenocarcinoma, Recurrence	19
Stephanie Coquia	
Case 6: Pancreatic Adenocarcinoma, Adenosquamous Variant	23
Stephanie Coquia	
Case 7: Acinar Cell Carcinoma	27
Katherine M. Troy and Karen S. Lee	
Case 8: Solid-Pseudopapillary Neoplasm	31
Katherine M. Troy and Karen S. Lee	
Case 9: Lymphoma	35
Katherine M. Troy and Karen S. Lee	
Case 10: Plasma Cell Neoplasm	39
Katherine M. Troy and Karen S. Lee	
Case 11: Schwannoma	43
Katherine M. Troy and Karen S. Lee	
Case 12: Lipoma	47
Katherine M. Troy and Karen S. Lee	

Case 13: Dedifferentiated Liposarcoma	51
Katherine M. Troy and Karen S. Lee	
Case 14: Melanoma Metastatic to the Pancreas	55
Katherine M. Troy and Karen S. Lee	
Case 15: Pancreatoblastoma	59
Javad Azadi and Atif Zaheer	
Part II Parenchymal Abnormalities: Geographic Parenchymal Changes	
Case 16: Acute Necrotizing Pancreatitis	65
Stephen I. Johnson	
Case 17: Sequelae of Necrotizing Pancreatitis	69
Stephen I. Johnson	
Case 18: Pancreatic Adenocarcinoma	73
Stephen I. Johnson	
Case 19: Breast Cancer Metastatic to the Pancreas	77
Javad Azadi and Atif Zaheer	
Case 20: Focal Fatty Infiltration	81
Stephen I. Johnson	
Case 21: Fatty Infiltration in Cystic Fibrosis	85
Stephen I. Johnson	
Case 22: Focal Radiation Atrophy	89
Stephen I. Johnson	
Case 23: Short Pancreas	93
Stephen I. Johnson	
Case 24: Serotonin-Producing Neuroendocrine Tumor	97
Stephen I. Johnson	
Case 25: Autoimmune Pancreatitis	101
Stephen I. Johnson	
Case 26: Focal Autoimmune Pancreatitis	107
Katherine S. Troy and Karen S. Lee	
Case 27: Autoimmune Pancreatitis Response to Therapy	113
Stephen I. Johnson	
Case 28: Focal Chronic Pancreatitis	117
Katherine S. Troy and Karen S. Lee	
Case 29: Hemochromatosis	121
Sajal Pokharel	

Part III Parenchymal Abnormalities: Cystic Lesions

Case 30: Serous Cystadenoma with Upstream Pancreatic Duct Dilatation	127
Christopher Fung	
Case 31: Small Serous Cystadenoma	131
Christopher Fung	
Case 32: Oligocystic Serous Cystadenoma	135
Christopher Fung	
Case 33: Mucinous Cystic Neoplasm with Low-Grade Dysplasia	139
Christopher Fung	
Case 34: Mucinous Cystic Neoplasm with Intermediate-Grade Dysplasia	143
Christopher Fung	
Case 35: Mucinous Cystic Neoplasm with High-Grade Dysplasia and Invasive Cancer	147
Christopher Fung	
Case 36: Mucinous Cystic Neoplasm, Cyst within a Cyst Appearance	151
Christopher Fung	
Case 37: Mucinous Cystic Neoplasm with Mural Nodule	155
Christopher Fung	
Case 38: Mucinous Cystic Neoplasm in Pancreatic Head	159
Christopher Fung	
Case 39: Intraductal Papillary Mucinous Neoplasm: Mixed-Type with Low-Grade Dysplasia	163
Christopher Fung	
Case 40: Multiple Intraductal Papillary Mucinous Neoplasms	167
Christopher Fung	
Case 41: Intraductal Papillary Mucinous Neoplasm versus Pseudocyst	171
Christopher Fung	
Case 42: Segmental Intraductal Papillary Mucinous Neoplasm	175
Christopher Fung	
Case 43: Pancreatic Ductal Adenocarcinoma Arising After Intraductal Papillary Mucinous Neoplasm Resection	179
Christopher Fung	

Case 44: Main Duct Intraductal Oncocytic Papillary Neoplasm	183
Christopher Fung	
Case 45: Solid-Pseudopapillary Neoplasm	187
Satomi Kawamoto	
Case 46: Two Solid-Pseudopapillary Neoplasms	193
Satomi Kawamoto	
Case 47: Small Lipoma Mimicking an IPMN	197
Atif Zaheer	
Case 48: Lymphoepithelial Cyst	203
Satomi Kawamoto	
Case 49: Foregut Malformation Cyst	209
Satomi Kawamoto	
Case 50: Pancreatic Cyst in Von Hippel-Lindau Syndrome	215
Satomi Kawamoto	
Case 51: Cystic Schwannoma	219
Sumera Ali and Atif Zaheer	
Case 52: Groove Pancreatitis	223
Sumera Ali and Atif Zaheer	
Case 53: Walled-Off Pancreatic Necrosis Mimicking a Mass Lesion	227
Atif Zaheer	
Case 54: Walled-Off Pancreatic Necrosis	231
Sumera Ali and Atif Zaheer	
Case 55: Chronic Pseudocysts	235
Sumera Ali and Atif Zaheer	
Case 56: Duodenal Diverticulum Mimicking a Pancreatic Cyst	239
Sumera Ali and Atif Zaheer	
Case 57: Cystic Neuroendocrine Tumor	243
Sumera Ali and Atif Zaheer	
Case 58: Undifferentiated Carcinoma with Osteoclast-Like Giant Cells	249
Stephanie Coquia	
Case 59: Acinar Cell Cystadenoma	253
Sumera Ali and Atif Zaheer	

Part IV Parenchymal Abnormalities: Solid Hyperenhancing Mass

Case 60: Neuroendocrine Tumor	259
Javad Azadi and Atif Zaheer	
Case 61: Renal Cell Carcinoma Metastatic to the Pancreas	263
Javad Azadi and Atif Zaheer	
Case 62: Castleman Disease	267
Katherine M. Troy and Karen S. Lee	
Case 63: Gastroduodenal Artery Pseudoaneurysm Mimicking a Mass	271
Javad Azadi and Atif Zaheer	
Case 64: Hypervascular Serous Cystadenoma	275
Javad Azadi and Atif Zaheer	
Case 65: Heterotopic Spleen	279
Javad Azadi and Atif Zaheer	
Case 66: Pseudomass of the Pancreas Associated with Bowel Malrotation	283
Javad Azadi and Atif Zaheer	
Case 67: Annular Pancreas	287
Javad Azadi and Atif Zaheer	
Case 68: Bifid Pancreatic Tail	291
Javad Azadi and Atif Zaheer	
Case 69: Heterotopic Pancreas	295
William Laxton	
Case 70: Pancreatic Arteriovenous Malformation	299
William Laxton	
Case 71: Pancreatic Hamartoma	303
William Laxton	
Case 72: Pancreatic Ductal Adenocarcinoma with Medullary Features	307
William Laxton	
Case 73: Pancreatic Epithelioid Angiosarcoma	311
Christopher Fung	
Case 74: VIPoma	315
Christopher Fung	

Case 75: Gastrinoma	319
Christopher Fung	
Case 76: Somatostatinoma	325
Christopher Fung	
Case 77: Glucagonoma	329
Christopher Fung	

Part V Parenchymal Abnormalities: Calcifications

Case 78: Chronic Pancreatitis	335
J. Paul Nielsen and Sajal Pokharel	
Case 79: Chronic Pancreatitis in Cystic Fibrosis	339
J. Paul Nielsen and Sajal Pokharel	
Case 80: Chronic Pancreatitis and Pancreatic Ductal Adenocarcinoma	343
J. Paul Nielsen and Sajal Pokharel	
Case 81: Neuroendocrine Tumor	349
James Horton and Sajal Pokharel	
Case 82: Undifferentiated Sarcomatoid Carcinoma	353
James Horton and Sajal Pokharel	
Case 83: Calcified Metastasis from Undifferentiated Pleomorphic Sarcoma	357
James Horton and Sajal Pokharel	
Case 84: Serous Cystadenoma with Central Calcifications	361
Christopher Fung	
Case 85: Mucinous Cystic Neoplasm with Capsular Calcifications	365
Christopher Fung	
Case 86: Solid-Pseudopapillary Neoplasm	369
Sumera Ali and Atif Zaheer	
Case 87: Intraductal Papillary Mucinous Neoplasm with Associated Colloid Cancer	373
Christopher Fung	

Part VI Ductal Abnormalities: Diffuse Ductal Abnormalities

Case 88: Mixed-Type Intraductal Papillary Mucinous Neoplasm	379
Satomi Kawamoto	
Case 89: Intraductal Tubulopapillary Neoplasm	385
Satomi Kawamoto	

Case 90: Double Pancreatic Duct MRI Artifact	391
Steven P. Rowe	
Case 91: Chronic Pancreatitis Ductal Changes	395
Steven P. Rowe	
Case 92: Chronic Pancreatitis, Intraductal Calculus	399
Steven P. Rowe	
Case 93: Chronic Pancreatitis, Ductal Stricture	403
Steven P. Rowe	
Case 94: Abnormal Acinarization of the Pancreas in Response to Secretin	407
Steven P. Rowe	
Case 95: Postoperative Changes from the Frey Procedure for Chronic Pancreatitis	411
Steven P. Rowe	
Case 96: Absent Duct in Autoimmune Pancreatitis	415
Satomi Kawamoto	
 Part VII Ductal Abnormalities: Focal Ductal Abnormalities	
Case 97: Long Common Channel	421
Kristin K. Porter	
Case 98: Pancreas Divisum with Santorinicele	425
Kristin K. Porter	
Case 99: Ansa Pancreatica	429
Kristin K. Porter	
Case 100: Pancreatic Ductal Disruption	433
Kristin K. Porter	
Case 101: Anastomotic Stricture Post Pancreaticoduodenectomy	437
Kristin K. Porter	
Index	441

Part I

Parenchymal Abnormalities: Focal Hypoenhancing Mass

Case 1: Pancreatic Adenocarcinoma with Upstream Textural Changes

Stephanie Coquia

Clinical History

54-year-old man with epigastric pain. Family history was pertinent for mother with pancreatic adenocarcinoma.

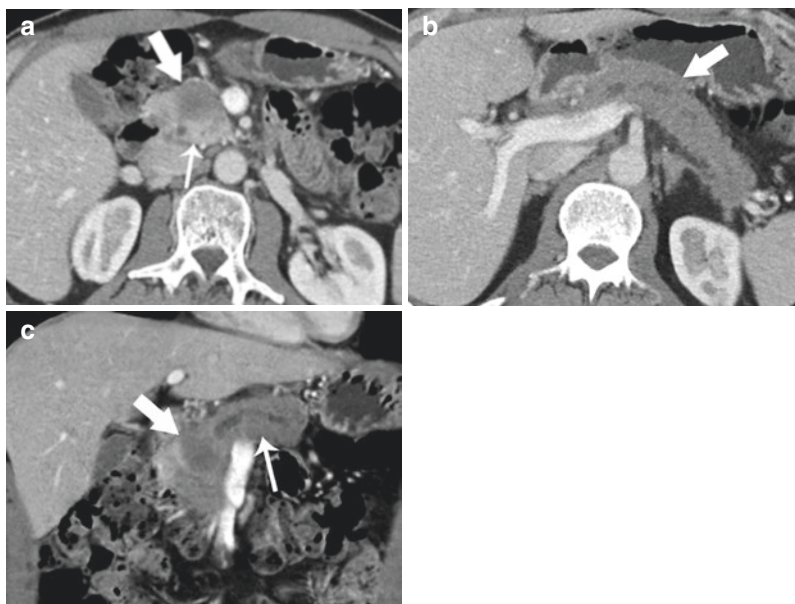


Fig. 1

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Imaging Findings

Axial post-contrast venous phase CT image demonstrates a hypoenhancing mass in the pancreatic head (Fig. 1a, *thick arrow*). Note the normal enhancement in the uncinate process of the pancreas (Fig. 1a, *thin arrow*). Diffuse hypoenhancement is seen in the pancreatic body and tail (Fig. 1b, *arrow*) with upstream dilation of the main pancreatic duct. A discrete mass is appreciated in the pancreatic head (Fig. 1c, *thick arrow*) which appears more mass-like compared to the diffuse hypoenhancement of the pancreatic tail (Fig. 1c, *thin arrow*).

Differential Diagnosis

Pancreatic adenocarcinoma and autoimmune pancreatitis.

Diagnosis

Pancreatic adenocarcinoma.

Discussion

Most cases of pancreatic adenocarcinoma (PDAC) are sporadic; however, 5–10% of patients have a family history of the disease. There is an increased risk of developing PDAC in patients with a first-degree relative with pancreatic adenocarcinoma. Cancer susceptibility syndromes such as hereditary breast and ovarian cancer, hereditary pancreatitis, Peutz-Jeghers syndrome, Lynch syndrome and familial atypical multiple mole melanoma all increase the risk of developing pancreatic adenocarcinoma [1]. For instance, patients with Peutz-Jeghers syndrome have a 130-fold increased risk of developing pancreatic cancer.

Typical CT imaging appearance of PDAC is the presence of a hypodense and hypoenhancing mass with respect to the surrounding uninvolved pancreatic parenchyma and upstream dilation of the main pancreatic duct due to duct obstruction (Fig. 1). It is most conspicuous on the pancreatic parenchymal phase (approximately 40 s after the administration of contrast). PDAC is hypointense on T1-weighted pre-contrast fat-saturated images because of its fibrotic nature from the desmoplastic stromal response to the malignancy [2] (Fig. 3). For this reason, delayed and rim enhancement may also be appreciated on post-contrast imaging (Fig. 3). Textural changes in the uninvolved upstream pancreatic parenchyma (Fig. 1b, c) due to superimposed pancreatitis or fibrosis from long-standing obstruction may sometimes occur, and these can appear similar to the changes seen in autoimmune pancreatitis (AIP) [3]. Serum IgG4 may help evaluate the patient for AIP, but variable sensitivity has been reported in the literature ranging from 44% to 70%. Some of the features that are typical for AIP and may help

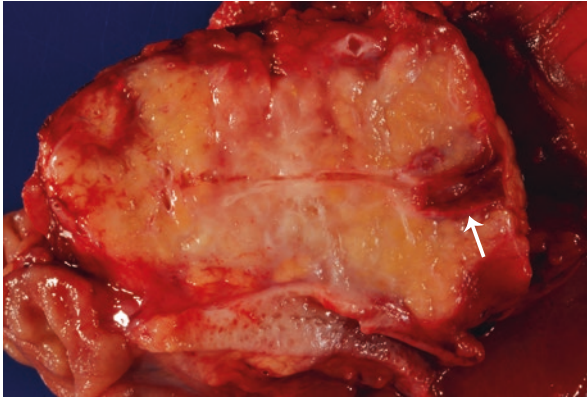


Fig. 2 The patient illustrated in Fig. 1 underwent Whipple procedure. The surgical resection specimen shows a sclerotic, white, stellate mass impinging on the pancreatic duct with ductal dilation upstream from the mass (Fig. 2, *arrow*). Histologically, the mass was found to be a pancreatic adenocarcinoma.

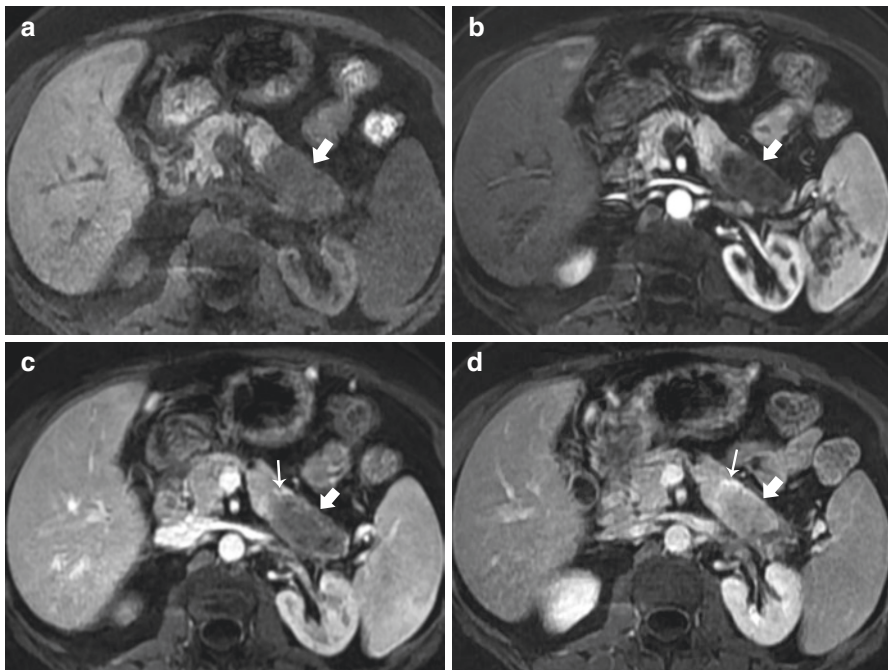


Fig. 3 Companion case. 58-year-old woman with PDAC. Note the presence of a hypointense mass on T1-weighted image (**a**, *arrow*) that demonstrates progressive enhancement on the arterial (**b**, *arrow*), venous (**c**, *thick arrow*) and delayed (**d**, *thick arrow*) phases after the administration of intravenous contrast. Note peripheral enhancement on the venous (**c**, *thin arrow*) and delayed phases (**d**, *thin arrow*)

differentiate AIP from PDAC include the presence of sausage-shaped appearance of the pancreas, delayed enhancement, hypodense capsule-like rim and wall thickening of the common bile duct [3, 4]. Patients with AIP can be treated with steroids rather than surgery, and imaging remains integral in differentiating PDAC from AIP [4, 5].

Teaching Point

In patients with PDAC, textural changes in the uninvolved upstream pancreatic parenchyma are due to superimposed pancreatitis or fibrosis from long-standing obstruction.

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Case 2: Pancreatic Adenocarcinoma with Superimposed Acute Pancreatitis

Stephanie Coquia

Clinical History

66-year-old man presented with vomiting and mild mid-abdomen pain.

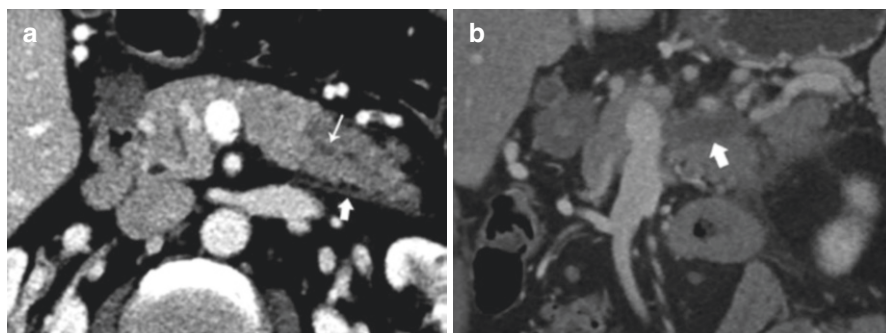


Fig. 1

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Imaging Findings

Axial contrast-enhanced late arterial phase CT image demonstrates hypoattenuation of the pancreatic tail compared to the normal-appearing pancreatic head and body with associated peripancreatic stranding (Fig. 1a, *thick arrow*) and abrupt dilation of the main pancreatic duct (Fig. 1a, *thin arrow*). Coronal contrast-enhanced venous phase maximal intensity projection (MIP) CT image demonstrates occlusion of the splenic vein (Fig. 1b, *arrow*) with associated collaterals in the left upper quadrant.

Differential Diagnosis

Focal acute pancreatitis, pancreatic adenocarcinoma with superimposed pancreatitis, and autoimmune pancreatitis.

Diagnosis

Pancreatic adenocarcinoma with superimposed pancreatitis.

Discussion

Pancreatic adenocarcinoma (PDAC) in rare instances may precipitate an episode of acute pancreatitis which may be secondary to mechanical obstruction of the pancreatic duct and ischemia caused by vascular invasion by the neoplastic cells or by direct activation of pancreatic enzymes [1]. In most cases patients present with a mild form of acute pancreatitis [1, 2].

Acute pancreatitis may be the first presentation of PDAC (Figs. 1 and 2), and the diagnosis of an occult malignancy may be considered in patients above the age of 40 years who do not have obvious risk factors for pancreatitis, such as gallstones or alcohol abuse [3].

Abrupt dilation of the pancreatic duct within the region of abnormality is the key finding in this case and is indicative of an obstructing lesion (Figs. 1a and 2a). Autoimmune pancreatitis may also present as a geographic area of low attenuation, but pancreatic ductal dilation is usually absent [4]. Serum IgG4 may be a helpful adjunct as it can be elevated in patients with autoimmune pancreatitis. In this patient, splenic vein thrombosis is a nonspecific finding as it can be seen in 7–20% of patients with acute pancreatitis and does not necessarily favor the diagnosis of PDAC [5]. Follow-up CT or MR may be necessary after the acute episode of pancreatitis, when the inflammatory changes have resolved, in order to adequately evaluate the pancreas for an underlying mass. Alternatively, endoscopic ultrasound (EUS) may be performed to evaluate the presence of an occult mass.

The patient illustrated in Fig. 1 underwent distal pancreatectomy and pathology revealed PDAC (Fig. 3).

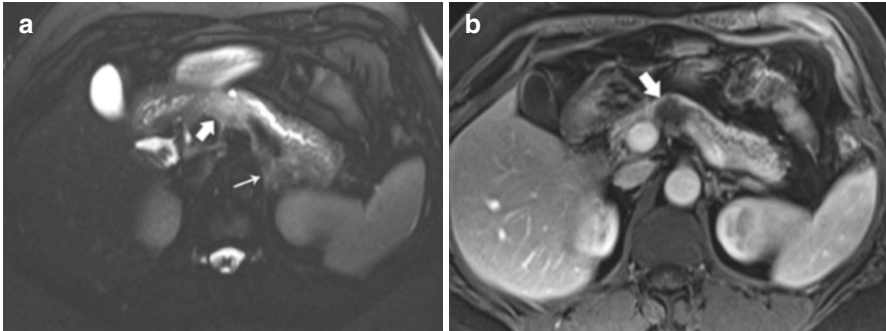


Fig. 2 Companion case. 48-year-old woman with abdominal pain and elevated serum lipase. Axial T2-weighted image demonstrates a hyperintense mass in the pancreatic body (**a**, *thick arrow*) and upstream pancreatic ductal dilation. Peripancreatic inflammatory changes are present (**a**, *thin arrow*). Axial contrast-enhanced T1-weighted image demonstrates a hypoenhancing mass in the pancreatic body (**b**, *arrow*) with upstream pancreatic ductal dilation. Patient underwent distal pancreatectomy for PDAC

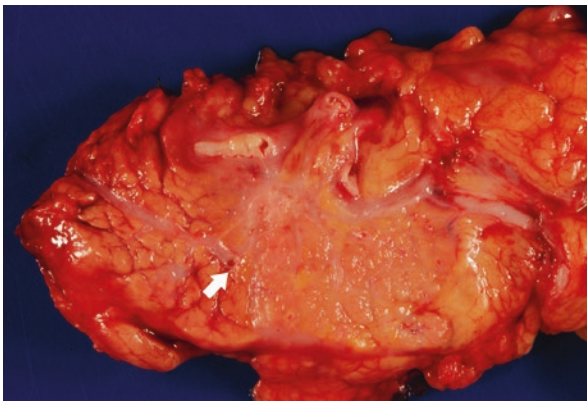


Fig. 3 The surgical resection specimen showed a probe patent pancreatic duct at the pancreatic margin (*left*) with an abrupt blockage midway through the specimen. The pancreas was bivalved to show normal tan, lobulated pancreatic parenchyma at the margin with loss of the normal architecture at the area where the duct disappears (*arrow*). This firm area had a heterogeneous appearance with yellow fat/atrophy and white bands of fibrosis. The differential diagnosis included both PDAC and, less likely, chronic pancreatitis. Histologic sections showed an undifferentiated PDAC

Teaching Point

Diagnosis of an occult malignancy may be considered in patients with otherwise no obvious risk factors for acute pancreatitis especially in the presence of an abruptly dilated pancreatic duct.

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Case 3: Pancreatic Adenocarcinoma, Unresectable

Stephanie Coquia

Clinical History

74-year-old man presented with early satiety, weight loss, postprandial nausea and vomiting, and intermittent abdominal pain.

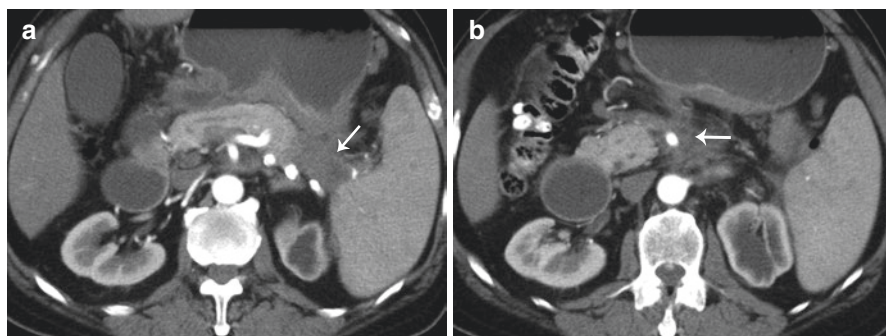


Fig. 1

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Imaging Findings

Axial contrast-enhanced arterial phase CT image demonstrates an ill-defined hypoattenuating mass (Fig. 1a, *arrow*) in the pancreatic tail extending to the splenic hilum. Axial contrast-enhanced arterial phase CT image demonstrates infiltrative soft tissue encasement of the superior mesenteric artery (SMA) (Fig. 1b, *arrow*).

Differential Diagnosis

Pancreatic adenocarcinoma and acute pancreatitis.

Diagnosis

Pancreatic adenocarcinoma, unresectable.

Discussion

Pancreatic adenocarcinoma frequently invades the periarterial neural plexus and lymphatics once it infiltrates the extrapancreatic fatty tissue. Radical resection of the superior mesenteric artery (SMA), a major supplier of blood to the gastrointestinal tract, has a high risk of bowel ischemia and death. In addition, even in the rare cases when this neurovascular tissue is resected, the patients are often left with positive margins that increase the risk of recurrent disease.

Tumor abutment of the SMA, defined as tumor contacting the artery for $\leq 180^\circ$ of its circumference, may be considered borderline resectable disease. However, encasement ($>180^\circ$) of the SMA precludes from resection [1, 2]. In the absence of encasement, SMA and the other major arteries in this region should be evaluated for the presence of variant anatomy especially related to the origin of the hepatic artery for presurgical planning as the presence of variant anatomy increases the risk for postoperative complications such as hemorrhage, pseudoaneurysm formation, and ischemia.

Tumor contact with the adjacent vessels can be well appreciated on CT and MRI. Tumor encasement of arteries ($>180^\circ$) seen on CT has a sensitivity of up to 80% and a specificity of 98% for tumor invasion [3] (Fig. 1).

In the present case, the patient's slowly progressive symptoms and the presence of an infiltrative mass in the pancreas exclude acute pancreatitis as the diagnosis.

Teaching Point

Tumor encasement of the SMA precludes surgery as a treatment option.

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