

RETROPERITONEAL SCHWANNOMAS: DIAGNOSTIC AND THERAPEUTIC IMPLICATIONS

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Aims and background: Schwannomas are a rare group of soft-tissue tumors that are derived from the peripheral nerve sheath and rarely develop in the retroperitoneum.

Methods and study design: We reviewed the clinicopathological features of 4 patients referred to our unit between October 1999 and March 2004 who on radiological examination were diagnosed with pancreatic, adrenal, psoas and retroperitoneal fat tissue tumors and subsequently underwent surgical treatment.

Results: The preoperative diagnosis was incorrect in all cases. At time of surgery, we found a mass probably arising from the

adrenal gland in 2 patients, a lesion originating from the femoral nerve in 1 patient, and a retroperitoneal mass without a clear site of origin in 1 patient. Pathological evaluation revealed schwannomas in all cases, with no signs of malignancy. Complete surgical excision was performed in all patients without any major postoperative complications. At the time of writing all patients are alive with no evidence of local or distant recurrence.

Conclusions: Radical surgical excision is considered the best treatment for these neoplasms, resulting in a very good long-term prognosis.

Key words: retroperitoneal mass, Schwann cell, schwannoma, soft-tissue tumor.