The Amazing Case of the Mobile Chest Tumor*

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A round mass in the cardiohepatic angle was seen on a routine chest film (Fig 1) of a 57-year-old asymptomatic white man. Figures 1 and 2 were PA and lateral teleroentgenograms on admission. Figure 3 is another PA view of a few days later. Figure 4 was obtained after diagnostic pneumothorax. The arrows outline an intrathoracic mass.

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Diagnosis: Pleural Fibroma

Figures 1 and 2 reveal a sharply outlined mass in the anterolateral portion of the base of the right hemithorax. Figure 3 demonstrates that the mass has moved medially and its long axis has become oriented more horizontally. The pneumothorax demonstrates that the mass is attached to the visceral pleura.

Figure 5 shows the appearance at operation. The mass was attached by a short pedicle to the surface of the right lower lobe. Histologic sections proved it to be a pleural fibroma.

Pleural fibroma is a relatively rare benign tumor that occurs with equal frequency in both sexes at an average age of 50 years. Occasionally a patient with a large mobile pleural tumor may complain of something rolling about in his chest when he changes body position. Our patient did not.

The tumor may reach enormous size. Most are well encapsulated and are often attached to the pleural surface by a pedicle, as in the present case. Visceral pleura usually covers most of the surface. This tumor is usually regarded as a true neoplasm. It has been suggested that it more frequently appears after a pulmonary infection. Le Roux\(^1\) regards it as potentially sarcomatous. Recurrence after resection is rare. The proper therapy is excision.

REFERENCE

A Measure of Galileo’s Greatness

Galileo (1564-1642) was the key to the development of modern science and technology. Galileo’s contributions were not only in the discoveries he made but equally in his procedures in making them. In effect, Galileo discovered science. He demonstrated that a fruitful scientific investigation starts with a conflict between preconceived notions and a new experience, followed by a critical searching analysis and the devising of crucial experiments. Essential to his approach was a disregard, even a defiance, of human authority and established dogma. In this attitude Galileo overcame a deep-rooted human tendency. Nearly all human beings are mentally lazy. When a difficult problem arises we may worry about it for a while, but we sooner or later abandon the effort and are pleased to fall back on the dicta of an authority on the subject. Most men spend their lives learning and parroting the dogmas of their time. The greatness of civilization today rests on the fact that rare venturesome souls like Galileo were capable of rising above the usual pattern.