

"THE STRAY BULLET THAT LED THE DOCTOR ASTRAY!": A CASE OF PENETRATING ABDOMINAL TRAUMA FROM UNSUSPECTED GUNSHOT INJURY.

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Introduction

Stray bullet injuries resulting from accidental firearm injury occurring outdoors by anonymous shooters are rare. However, they should be suspected in a patient who presented with sudden onset penetrating injuries with no apparent cause, as most of the victims may not even be aware that they have sustained gunshot injuries. While the injury may result from a violent act, it may be due to hunting, celebratory shooting, or accidental.

Case Description

A 20-year-old healthy lady was referred from a rural district hospital for an acute abdomen with suspected perforated viscous. The patient worked as a rubber tapper and was working in her rubber plantation away from the town. While turning and facing out the rubber tree, she felt something hit her pubic area, causing pain, and fell to the ground. She presented to the nearby emergency department, where her vital signs were normal, and regular intravenous Tramadol managed the pain. There was a puncture area on her clothes and a small, rounded wound at the pubic region, initially documented as an abrasion wound. Chest X-ray erect showed air under the diaphragm. Serial Focused Assessment with Sonography for Trauma (FAST) scan was positive for pelvic free fluid. She was transferred to our center coming morning. Subsequently, a diagnosis of penetrating abdominal trauma secondary to a gunshot injury was made, and the patient was sent to the operation theatre for exploratory laparotomy.

Discussion

Although gunshot usually produces a loud sound following the firing of ammunition, multiple factors may attenuate the sounds. Situational awareness among the victims might differ, causing them not to recognize the gunshot incident; hence, the stray bullet injuries were not initially suspected in this case. The severity of injuries following stray bullets depends on many factors, including the type of firearm, bullet caliber, bullet trajectory, and distance from the shooter.

Conclusion

Stray bullet injuries must be suspected following penetrating trauma of no apparent cause, even with the absence of a gunshot sound. Failure to do so may cause inadequate management, delay in transfer to definitive care, and increase morbidity and mortality.

Keywords

Penetrating abdominal trauma, stray bullet, gunshot.