

QUESTION

A 60-year-old man with a long history of hypertension and hypercholesterolemia presents with a 2-week history of increasing fatigue, weight loss, and a low-grade fever. He has no cough, hemoptysis, or chest pain. Physical examination is unremarkable. Laboratory studies show hemoglobin 10 g/dL, hematocrit 30%, and erythrocyte sedimentation rate 45 mm/h. A chest radiograph shows a 2-cm nodule in the right upper lobe. A CT scan of the chest shows a 2-cm nodule in the right upper lobe and a 1-cm nodule in the left lower lobe. A PET scan shows increased uptake in both nodules. A biopsy of the right nodule shows a well-circumscribed, solid, tan, lobulated mass with a central area of necrosis. The tumor is composed of nests and cords of cells with a high nuclear-to-cytoplasmic ratio and prominent nucleoli. The tumor is surrounded by a fibrous capsule. The most likely diagnosis is

1. adenocarcinoma
2. bronchioloalveolar carcinoma
3. squamous cell carcinoma
4. small cell carcinoma
5. neuroendocrine tumor

ANSWER

3. Squamous cell carcinoma
The patient's history of hypertension and hypercholesterolemia, along with his symptoms of fatigue, weight loss, and low-grade fever, are consistent with a diagnosis of squamous cell carcinoma. The chest radiograph and CT scan findings of a 2-cm nodule in the right upper lobe and a 1-cm nodule in the left lower lobe, along with the PET scan findings of increased uptake in both nodules, are also consistent with a diagnosis of squamous cell carcinoma. The biopsy findings of a well-circumscribed, solid, tan, lobulated mass with a central area of necrosis, composed of nests and cords of cells with a high nuclear-to-cytoplasmic ratio and prominent nucleoli, surrounded by a fibrous capsule, are characteristic of squamous cell carcinoma.

DISCUSSION

Squamous cell carcinoma is the most common type of lung cancer, accounting for approximately 40% of all lung cancer cases. It is characterized by the presence of nests and cords of cells with a high nuclear-to-cytoplasmic ratio and prominent nucleoli, surrounded by a fibrous capsule.

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