

Management of Ectopic Breast Tissue in the Axilla

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Background: Accessory axillary breast tissue is a rare abnormality with an incidence of 0.2-6.0 %. The majority of women with ectopic breast tissue have no symptoms, but about one-third experience symptoms such as soreness, pain, restriction of arm movement, embarrassment due to the lump of tissue in the axilla, and anxiety due to the fear of malignancy. The treatment possibilities of ectopic breast tissue are numeral. There is currently not a single procedure generally accepted as standard of care.

Methods: A retrospective observational study was performed at Rigshospitalet, department for Plastic Surgery, Breast Surgery and Burns, including patients from 2010-2013. Data were collected to describe symptoms, treatment, hospitalisation and complications.

Results: The inclusion criteria were fulfilled by 85 patients. The most common symptoms were a lump or swelling, pain or soreness. The most common treatment used was conservative, which was defined as no invasive treatment. Surgical excisional treatment was the only type of invasive management performed at the departments. The number of patients treated surgically was 42 (49%), and more than half of these patients experienced some kind of complication, the most prevalent being formation of seroma and paresthesia.

Conclusion: In our study we found a high risk of complications after surgical excision of ectopic breast tissue. Until further evidence exists, conservative treatment should be encouraged while bearing in mind the balance between the harm of the condition and the quality of life for the patient.