

Superficial thrombosis of a varicose vein of the abdominal wall as the first sign of an otherwise occult locally-advanced ovarian cancer

A growing amount of evidence has accumulated, since Trousseau's first report,¹ demonstrating that cancer patients often have activation of the hemostatic system,²⁻³ sometimes leading to overt thromboembolic episodes. A 52-year old woman presented to the Emergency Department complaining of pain localized to a varicose vein of the abdominal wall (Figure 1 a/b); a compression ultrasonography demonstrated that the vein could not be compressed and the patient was discharged receiving low molecular weight heparin. A subsequent abdominal ultrasonography showed the presence of a locally-advanced ovarian tumor. Atypical thrombotic presentations may be associated with an otherwise silent malignancy, suggesting the need to screen patients with such presentations⁴ for a possible underlying cancer.

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Figure 1a/b - A 52-year old woman complained of pain localized to a varicose vein of the abdominal wall; objectively, the vein was markedly ectasic, of increased consistency and painful at palpation, while the surrounding skin was swollen and inflamed.