Radionuclide Imaging
of Infection and Inflammation
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Radionuclide Imaging of Infection and Inflammation

A Pictorial Case-Based Atlas

Forewords by Christopher J. Palestro
and Giovanni Lucignani

Springer
Foreword

There have been significant advances in our understanding of microorganisms and the pathogenesis of infection and inflammation as well as an increased availability of antimicrobial therapy in recent decades. Infection, nevertheless, remains a major cause of patient morbidity and mortality throughout the world. While the presence of infection may be suggested by certain signs and symptoms such as pain, loss of appetite, fever, general malaise and abnormal laboratory results, imaging studies often are used to localize or confirm the presence of infection. The imaging studies can be divided into two principal categories: morphological and functional. Morphological, or anatomic, imaging tests, such as radiographs, ultrasound, computed tomography and magnetic resonance, reveal anatomic or structural alterations in tissues or organs, which, in infection, are caused by a combination of microbial invasion and the immune response of the host to the invasion. Functional imaging studies, which are typified by radionuclide tests, make use of small quantities of radioactive material, or tracers that either are taken up by cells, tissues and organs directly, or are attached to native substances that subsequently migrate to the region of interest. Radiolabeled bisphosphonates, for example, are directly incorporated into the bone. Radiopharmaceuticals labeled with indium-111 or technetium-99m bind intracellularly in leukocytes, and are therefore used to monitor white cell accumulation at foci of infection. Other functional imaging tests used for localizing infection include gallium-67 citrate (and more recently the positron emitter gallium-68), and [18F]fluorodeoxyglucose positron emission tomography ([18F]FDG-PET).

Although radionuclide imaging has been used for diagnosing and localizing infection for nearly fifty years, and despite significant advances in agents, equipment, and imaging techniques, “nuclear infectology” has often been overshadowed by other areas of our specialty. One only has to compare the plethora of texts devoted to radionuclide imaging in oncology with the very few devoted to inflammation and infection in order to appreciate the void in our specialty.

Merely publishing a textbook, however, does not ensure its quality. Textbooks, regardless of whether they are of the traditional print or the more recent e-book style, are the foundation of medical knowledge, providing basic facts and a broad overview of a topic. The best textbooks do not contain exhaustive detail, or subtleties of diagnosis or management, all of which can be found in complementary resources. The success and value of a textbook depends on the organization, accessibility, and substantiality, of the information within.

Radionuclide Imaging of Infection and Inflammation: A Pictorial Case-Based Atlas edited by Lazzeri, Signore, Erba, Prandini, Versari, D’Errico and Mariani, admirably fulfills the criteria of the successful textbook. It begins with a thorough review of the commonly used radiopharmaceuticals, including the normal biodistributions, variants and pitfalls in image interpretation. This information not only sets the stage, and is especially useful, for studying the chapters that follow, but also provides the reader a readily accessible section for reference, when questions in other chapters, and even in daily practice, arise. The role of nuclear medicine in the usual clinical scenarios, such as soft tissue and musculoskeletal infections as
well as in fever of unknown origin (FUO), is thoroughly covered, objectively presented, well illustrated and referenced. Equally important are the chapters devoted to somewhat less well known or at least less frequently reviewed, situations such as infections of the lungs, central nervous system, and cardiovascular implantable devices, as well as chronic inflammatory diseases. The clinical cases provided at the end of the chapters provide valuable teaching points to supplement and enhance the text. The illustrations have been thoughtfully chosen and carefully prepared, incorporating the latest in hybrid imaging techniques.

It is gratifying indeed that this atlas has been organized by clinical entity rather than by technology. Our primary focus, albeit through imaging, is that of patient care, and it is both logical and better for the patient and for us, to focus on diseases rather than on technologies.

I now invite you, my fellow student, to read, to enjoy, and especially, to learn from *Radiouclide Imaging of Infection and Inflammation: A Pictorial Case-Based Atlas.*

October 2012

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Foreword

The publication of this Atlas is an important achievement for the “Infection and Inflammation” Study Group of the Italian Association of Nuclear Medicine (AIMN), not least because it will allow the group’s expertise to be shared with colleagues worldwide. It is also a tangible reflection of the high level of professionalism and cooperation that exists within the group.

The fact that it is published by Springer will certainly help the AIMN in its pursuit of a key aim: to promote the efficient dissemination of scientific data and advances in the field of nuclear medicine that have relevance to other disciplines. In this regard, this Atlas follows in the footsteps of other publications produced within the context of the Italian nuclear medicine community.

As current president of the AIMN, I am therefore delighted by the completion of this volume, which will undoubtedly strengthen our knowledge of diagnostic nuclear medicine.

October 2012

Giovanni Lucignani
President of the Italian Association of Nuclear Medicine (AIMN)
Preface

Inflammation is the physiological response of the body to any injury, which may be constituted by infection, a simple trauma, reduced blood supply, or also a tumor. The inflammatory response involves endothelial/vascular changes, local production of several chemotactic factors and cytokines, migration and accumulation of different types of immune cells (the task of which is to repair tissue damage and/or to destroy infectious agents), and postinflammatory events (such as granulomas or fibrosis). The pattern of immune cell population and the resulting histopathologic features differ according to the type of injury and its persistence over time. When inflammation is elicited in response to infection, granulocytes are continuously recruited by chemotactic bacterial factors; in trauma and degenerative diseases, granulocytes may be present transiently, but are followed by a lymphocytic infiltration; in the presence of tumor cells, NK cells and macrophages predominate; in autoimmune diseases and graft rejection, it is T- and B-cells in addition to macrophages that predominate. If the pathological injury persists over time, inflammation may further evolve from an ‘acute’ type reaction to a ‘chronic’ type reaction, which is generally characterized by a lesser degree of vascular involvement and more important mononuclear cell infiltration, with eventual formation of granulomas or fibrosis.

All such features are not highly specific for any particular type of injury, and may in fact have various overlaps, both in terms of type of cell population involved and in terms of time-related patterns. Therefore, the inflammatory response should be considered as a ‘dynamic’ process self-adapting to an evolving pathophysiologic condition, rather than a ‘stereotyped’ response elicited indifferently by all injuries.

Diagnostic imaging with modern molecular nuclear medicine is based on the availability of sensitive and relatively specific radiopharmaceuticals tailored for the different targets that can be expressed in this complex scenario.

Three important consequences emerge from the above considerations: i) choice of the ‘best’ radiopharmaceutical for imaging infection/inflammation should be based on clinical ground, as well as on the timing and etiology of the process; ii) dynamic pathophysiology of the inflammatory process (with its associated histopathologic features) is the basis for distinguishing a ‘sterile acute inflammation’ from a ‘septic acute inflammation’, or a ‘sterile chronic inflammation’ from a ‘septic chronic inflammation’; iii) correct diagnosis of infection/inflammation is dictated by optimal use of the available radiopharmaceuticals (in terms of indication for employing a particular imaging agent and in terms of preparation and quality control), as well as by optimal use of image acquisition protocols, image elaboration, and image interpretation.

Throughout this atlas the term ‘inflammation’ is frequently used as synonymous with ‘sterile acute inflammation’ or ‘sterile chronic inflammation’, while the term ‘infection’ is used as a synonym of ‘septic acute inflammation’ or ‘septic chronic inflammation’.

While several radiopharmaceuticals are now commercially available for imaging infection, many others are currently under investigation, including radiolabeled cytokines, peptides, some monoclonal antibodies, antibiotics, vitamins, etc. This atlas only deals with the routine clinical use of commercially available radiopharmaceuticals or cell preparations, such as radiolabelled leukocytes ($^{99m}$Tc-HMPAO and $^{111}$In-oxine), nanocolloids, monoclonal antibodies, $^{67}$Ga-citrate and $^{18}$F]FDG.
We refer the reader to other textbooks and guidelines for thorough, in-depth understanding of the use of available radiopharmaceuticals, indications, acquisition protocols, and interpretation criteria. Whereas, the goal of this atlas is to guide the practitioners and students through a wide selection of diagnostic images as obtained in the clinical routine of different centers for different clinical conditions involving infection/inflammation. We placed special emphasis on information enabling the recognition of the normal biodistribution patterns of radiopharmaceuticals (including possible pitfalls and artifacts, as discussed in Chapter 1), as well as the main imaging findings in more than 30 different inflammatory/infective disorders.

Some chapters describe the most frequent infection/inflammation conditions that are referred to nuclear medicine departments for diagnosis and characterization, such as bone and joint infection (Chapters 3 and 11), joint prosthesis infections (Chapter 4), vascular prosthesis infection (Chapter 5), fever of unknown origin (Chapter 9), and inflammatory bowel diseases (Chapter 10). All such chapters include some teaching cases, where it is quite easy (also for the untrained eye) to recognize, even on planar imaging, the abnormal accumulation of radiopharmaceutical over time at the site of infection, while in some other cases the comparison between planar and tomographic images emphasizes the added value of hybrid imaging (mostly SPECT/CT) to exactly localize the site of infection and its extension to surrounding structures.

Other chapters describe less common diseases, that are therefore illustrated with fewer diagnostic cases, such as soft tissue infections (Chapter 2), infection of non-orthopedic prosthesis implants and resident electronic medical devices (Chapter 6), infections of the central nervous system and head and neck structures (Chapter 7), infective endocarditis (Chapter 8), lung infections (Chapter 12), and inflammatory, noninfectious diseases such as vasculitis, sarcoidosis, rheumatoid arthritis, etc. (Chapter 13). The scans included in these chapters have been selected so as to indicate how, in the evaluation of some cases such as infective endocarditis or chest vascular prosthesis, SPECT/CT imaging is an essential requirement for correct diagnostic interpretation.

With this atlas we intended to fill an important gap in the nuclear medicine books published so far, by providing the essential background both for understanding the pathophysiologic basis of radionuclide imaging of infection/inflammation and for correctly interpreting the diagnostic images obtained in these conditions. Nevertheless, the role of nuclear medicine imaging in each condition is presented in the general perspective commonly encountered in the clinical practice, which also includes the use of other imaging modalities. The ‘clinical cases’ have the purpose of demonstrating the clinical impact of nuclear medicine imaging procedures in the workout of patients with suspected infection/inflammation.

This atlas is the result of years of common work with colleagues of the Study Group of Inflammation/Infection of the Italian Association of Nuclear Medicine (AIMN). All authors have contributed both by writing specific chapters and by providing images and clinical cases for all chapters. Not only the authors, but also many other colleagues from Italy and from abroad have contributed interesting pictures and clinical cases. We are therefore deeply indebted to all such contributors, who are acknowledged at the end of each chapter. In particular, our close collaborators, Dr Roberto Boni, Dr Marta Pacilio, Dr Virginia Rossetti, and Dr Martina Sollini deserve special acknowledgements.

Last but not least, we wish to thank the team of publishers at Springer for allowing us to prepare and publish this atlas book in a very short time.

October 2012

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Contents

1 Normal Findings from Different Radiopharmaceuticals and Techniques, with Variants and Pitfalls ............................................. 1
   Annibale Versari
   1.1 $^{67}$Ga-citrate Scintigraphy ........................................ 1
   1.2 $^{99m}$Tc-diphosphonate (MDP/HDP) Scintigraphy ............... 5
   1.3 $^{99m}$Tc-nanocolloids ............................................. 7
   1.4 $^{99m}$Tc-besilesomab BW 250/183 (Scintimun®) ................. 7
   1.5 $^{99m}$Tc-falonesomab (Leu-Tech®, NeutroSpec®) ................. 8
   1.6 $^{99m}$Tc-sulesomab (LeukoScan®) ................................ 9
   1.7 $^{111}$In-oxine-leukocyte Scintigraphy ............................ 9
   1.8 $^{99m}$Tc-HMPAO-Leukocyte Scintigraphy .......................... 11
   1.9 $[^{18}F]$FDG-PET and $[^{18}F]$FDG-PET/CT ......................... 12
   References ..................................................................... 18

2 Nuclear Medicine Imaging of Soft Tissue Infections ................ 23
   Giovanni D’Errico
   2.1 Examples of Soft-Tissue Infection Imaging ...................... 25
   Clinical Cases
   Case 2.1 - Acute Cholecystitis in Patient with Chronic Acalculous
   Cholecystitis .................................................................. 33
   Case 2.2 - Fascitis of the Vastus Lateralis Muscle .................. 35
   Case 2.3 - Meningeal Bacterial Infection ............................. 36
   References ..................................................................... 38

3 Nuclear Medicine Imaging of Bone and Joint Infection .......... 39
   Elena Lazzeri
   3.1 Infection of Peripheral Bone ........................................ 39
   3.2 Infection of the Axial Skeleton ..................................... 40
   3.3 Joint Infection ..................................................... 40
   3.4 Examples of Imaging .............................................. 41
   3.4.1 Examples of Peripheral Bone Infection ....................... 41
   3.4.2 Examples of Axial Skeleton Infection ......................... 54
   3.4.3 Examples of Joint Infection ................................... 60
   Clinical Cases
   Case 3.1 - Brodie’s Abscess ......................................... 69
   Case 3.2 - Talo-navicular Infection ................................... 72
   Case 3.3 - Vertebral Infection ........................................ 74
   Case 3.4 - Sacro-ileitis ............................................... 75
   Case 3.5 - Septic Arthritis .......................................... 78
   References ..................................................................... 79
4 Nuclear Medicine Imaging of Joint Prosthesis Infections ................. 81
Napoleone Prandini and Gaetano Caruso

4.1 Infection of Joint Protheses ...................................... 81
4.2 Nuclear Medicine Imaging ........................................ 82
4.2.1 Examples of Imaging ........................................... 84
References .......................................................... 106

5 Nuclear Medicine Imaging of Vascular Prosthesis ....................... 107
Giovanni D’Errico

5.1 Imaging Techniques ............................................. 107
5.1.2 Computed Tomography ....................................... 108
5.1.3 Magnetic Resonance Imaging ................................... 108
5.1.4 Nuclear Medicine Techniques ................................... 108
5.1.5 Examples of Imaging ........................................... 109
Clinical Cases
Case 5.1 - Fistula to the Portion of the Duodenal-Jejunal Loop at the Level of Treitz and to Transverse Tract of Colon ......................... 120
Case 5.2 - Infection of Vascular Graft Without Bone Involvement .......... 122
Case 5.3 - Aortic Graft Crossing the Eroded Duodenal Wall .............. 124
Case 5.4 - Stenosis of the Vascular Graft in the Right Popliteal Artery with Cutaneous Fistula .............................................. 127
Case 5.5 - False Negative Labeled Leukocyte Scintigraphy in Case of Fungal Infection (Candida Albicans) with Low Recruitment of Leukocytes into Infection Site ........................................ 129
References .......................................................... 133

5 Nonorthopedic or Cardiovascular Implantable Device Infection .......... 135
Paola A. Erba

6.1 Infections of Central Venous Catheters ................................ 136
6.2 Infection of Ventricular Shunts, Deep Brain Stimulators ............... 136
6.3 Infection of Respiratory Assistance Devices ........................... 137
6.4 Infection of Peritoneal Dialysis Catheters ............................ 137
6.5 Infection of Penile Devices ........................................ 137
6.6 Infection of Breast Implants ....................................... 137
6.7 Infection of Cochlear Implants .................................... 138
Clinical Cases
Case 6.1 - CVC Infection in Patient with LLC and FUO ................. 138
Case 6.2 - Infection of a Vascular Patch ................................ 141
Case 6.3 - Skull Patch Infection ....................................... 143
Case 6.4 - Esophageal Prosthesis Infection ................................ 147
Case 6.5 - Infection of Abdominal Drainage Catheter .................... 150
Case 6.6 - Infection of the Peritoneal Drainage Extended to the Abdominal Wall .................................................. 151
Case 6.7 - Infection of a Neurological Stimulator ........................ 154
Case 6.8 - Lung Infection in Patient with Tracheotomy .................. 157
Case 6.9 - Lung Infection in Patient with Tracheotomy .................. 160
References .......................................................... 161
7 Nuclear Medicine Imaging of Infections and Inflammation of Central Nervous System, Head and Neck Structures .................................................. 165
Alberto Signore and Alberto Biggi

7.1 Examples of CNS, Head and Neck Structure Imaging .......................... 167

Clinical Cases
Case 7.1 - A case of Dermoid Cyst Simulating a Brain Abscess .................... 171
Case 7.2 - Suspected Right Temporal Bone Osteomyelitis in a Patient With Malignant External Otitis ......................................................... 173
Case 7.3 - Suspected Infection of Cervical Bone After Fractures and Stabilization 174
Case 7.4 - Infection of a Ventricular-peritoneal Shunt ................................ 178
References ....................................................................................... 180

8 Infective Endocarditis and Cardiovascular Implantable Electronic Device Infection ................................................................. 181
Paola A. Erba

8.1 Infective Endocarditis .................................................................. 181
8.2 Cardiovascular Implantable Electronic Devices ................................. 188

Clinical Cases
Case 8.1 - 99mTc-HMPAO-WBC SPECT/CT Diagnosis of Native Mitral Valve IE 191
Case 8.2 - 99mTc-HMPAO-WBC SPECT/CT for the Diagnosis of IE and Subsequent Evaluation of Response to Antimicrobial Therapy .... 194
Case 8.3 - 99mTc-HMPAO-WBC SPECT/CT Excluding CIED Infection, but Diagnosing IE and Spleen Embolism ............................ 197
References ....................................................................................... 202

9 Nuclear Medicine Imaging of FUO .................................................. 205
Elena Lazzeri

9.1 Examples of Imaging in Patients with FUO ...................................... 207

Clinical Cases
Case 9.1 - Segmental Aortitis ................................................................ 222
Case 9.2 - Enterohepatic Fistula ............................................................ 226
References ....................................................................................... 228

10 Nuclear Medicine Imaging of Abdominal Infections and Inflammation .... 229
Alberto Signore

10.1 Intra-abdominal Infections ............................................................ 229
10.2 Inflammatory Bowel Diseases (IBD) .............................................. 230
10.3 Idiopathic Retroperitoneal Fibrosis ................................................. 231
10.4 Other Abdominal Infections .......................................................... 231
10.5 Examples of Abdominal Infection and Inflammation Imaging .......... 232

Clinical Cases
Case 10.1 - A case of Differential Diagnosis Between a Liver Abscess and a Cyst ........................................................................ 246
Case 10.2 - A case of Differential Diagnosis Between Abdominal Abscess or Tumor ...................................................................... 248
Case 10.3 - A Case of Relapsing Crohn’s Disease ................................. 250
References ....................................................................................... 251
11 Nuclear Medicine Imaging of Diabetic Foot .......................... 253
Napoleone Prandini and Fausto Beretta

11.1 Diabetic Foot Infection ........................................ 253
11.2 Charcot Neuroarthropathy ...................................... 254
11.2.1 Examples of Diabetic Foot Infection Imaging .......... 255

Clinical Cases
Case 11.1 - Charcot Neuroarthropathy ......................... 262
Case 11.2 - Osteomyelitis .......................................... 265
References ..................................................... 269

12 Nuclear Medicine Imaging of Lung Infection ....................... 271
Martina Sollini and Giuliano Mariani

12.1 Examples of Lung Infection Imaging ............................. 274

Clinical Cases
Case 12.1 - [18F]FDG PET/CT in Patient with Lung Tuberculosis ........ 279
Case 12.2 - [18F]FDG PET/CT and 99mTc-HMPAO-leukocyte Scintigraphy for Characterizing Inflammatory and Infectious Disease ......... 282
References ..................................................... 287

13 Nuclear Medicine Imaging in Chronic Inflammatory Diseases ....... 289
Annibale Versari

13.1 Rheumatoid Arthritis ........................................... 289
13.2 Vasculitis ................................................... 290
13.3 Sarcoidosis .................................................. 291
13.4 Sjögren Syndrome ............................................ 291
13.5 Atherosclerosis ............................................... 292
13.6 Examples of Chronic Inflammatory Diseases Imaging ............ 293

Clinical Cases
Case 13.1 - Vasculitis: 99mTc-HMPAO-Leukocyte Scintigraphy ........ 302
Case 13.2 - Large Vessels Vasculitis: [18F]FDG PET/CT .............. 305
Case 13.3 - Large Vessels Vasculitis and Sarcoidosis ............... 308
Case 13.4 - Large Vessels Vasculitis: Treatment Response Evaluation .... 312
Case 13.5 - Takayasu Arteritis ....................................... 315
Case 13.6 - Abdominal Aortitis: Treatment Monitoring ............... 318
Case 13.7 - Chronic Periaortitis and Inflammatory Aneurysm ........ 321
Case 13.8 - Interstitial Pneumonia ................................. 324
Case 13.9 - Active Arthritis ......................................... 327
References ..................................................... 329
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