

*THE ROLE OF
(POSITRON EMISSION TOMOGRAPHY/
COMPUTED TOMOGRAPHY) " PET/CT "
IN ADRENAL MASSES*

Essay

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· Contents

· Subjects	Page
· <i>Introduction.....</i>	<i>-1-</i>
· <i>Aim of the work.....</i>	<i>-4-</i>
· <i>Anatomy of Adrenal Gland.....</i>	<i>-5-</i>
· <i>PET/CT Radiological Anatomy of Adrenal Gland.....</i>	<i>-16-</i>
· <i>Pathology of Different Adrenal Masses.....</i>	<i>-22-</i>
· <i>Technique of PET/CT.....</i>	<i>-34-</i>
· <i>Clinical Manifestations and PET/CT Findings in Adrenal Masses.</i>	<i>-51-</i>
· <i>Summary and Conclusion.....</i>	<i>-80-</i>
· <i>References.....</i>	<i>-84-</i>
· <i>Arabic Summary.....</i>	<i>-90-</i>

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List of Abbreviations

ACTH	AdrenoCorticoTrophic Hormone
BGO	Bisthmus Germinate
FDG	FluoroDeoxyGlucose
FOV.....	Field Of View
LSO	Lutetium Oxyorthesilicate
MEN.....	Multiple Endocrine Neoplasia
NAI	Sodium Iodide
PET	Positron Emission Tomography
PET/CT	Positron
.....	Emission Tomography/ Computerized Tomography
PMT	Photomultiplier Tube
ROI.....	Region Of Interest
US.....	Ultrasonography

List of tables

Table 1: Normal adrenal gland size for age	-38-
Table 2: Common PET radioisotopes.....	-43-
Table 3: Average adult PET and PET/CT scan times	-45-
Table 4: Acquisition Protocol Considerations in PET, CT, and PET/CT Whole-Body Imaging.....	-48-

List of figures

Figure 1: Normal anatomy.....	-6-
Figure 2: External appearance of adrenal.....	-7-
Figure 3: Arterial supply of the adrenals.....	-8-
Figure 4: Venous drainage of the adrenal gland.....	-9-
Figure 5: Section of a part of a suprarenal gland	-10-
Figure 6: Human, Zenker's fluid, H & E., 22 x.....	-11-
Figure 7: Suprarenal glands viewed from the front.....	-13-
Figure 8: Suprarenal glands viewed from behind	-13-
Figure 9: Relations of the suprarenal glands	-15-
Figure 10: Normal appearance	-17-
Figure 11: Normal Adrenals Shown by CT	-18-
Figure 12: This maximum intensity-projection image is the only case in which the readers agreed that the adrenal gland could be seen on the PET-alone image review.....	-20-
Figure 13: visual scoring.....	-21-
Figure 14: Gross specimen of a cortical adenoma of the adrenal.....	-23-
Figure 15: An adenoma made up of compact clear cells is seen on the left hand side, compressing residual, normal cortex on the right.....	-24-
Figure 16: This patient underwent left radical nephrectomy, adrenalectomy, distal pancreatectomy and splenectomy for adrenal cortical carcinoma.....	-25-
Figure 17: This patient presented with Cushing's syndrome and hypertension. CT scan revealed a 12.5 cm left adrenal Mass.....	-26-
Figure 18: This sharply circumscribed 3.5 cm pheochromocytoma presented in a 13 year old boy with von Hippel-Lindau disease.....	-27-
Figure 19: The cells composing a pheochromocytoma are similar to the adrenal medulla chromaffin cells.....	-28-
Figure 20: A 5.0 cm, well-circumscribed, firm, multinodular ganglioneuroma that arose in the adrenal	-30-
Figure 21: This specimen represents a left adrenal mass removed from a 63 year old man 11 years after he underwent right radical nephrectomy for renal cell carcinom.....	-31-
Figure 22: It is a benign, tumor-like lesion consisting of mature adipose tissue with hematopoietic elements arising in the adrenal.....	-32-
Figure 23: Positron–electron annihilation reaction	-36-
Figure 24: Pictorial representation of (A) a true coincidence, (B) a scatter event, and (C) a random Coincidence.....	-37-

List of figures (cont.)

Figure 25: Uptake of FDG. FDG is a glucose analog that is taken up by metabolically active cells by means of facilitated transport via glucose transporters (Glut) in the cell membrane.....	-39-
Figure 26: Normal PET study. From right-to-left, the rotating images are a useful way to survey lesions prior to reading the planar images on PET-CT.....	-40-
Figure 27: Photograph (side view) of a hybrid PET-CT scanner shows the PET (P) and CT (C) components.....	-44-
Figure 28: Standard FDG-PET/CT imaging protocol.....	-46-
Figure 29: High-density metal artifacts, such as hip implants, cause streak artifacts on CT (A), which may translate into tracer uptake patterns on corrected PET images (B).....	-50-
Figure 30: Adrenal adenoma in a 63-year-old woman with a history of mucosa-associated lymphoid tissue lymphoma.....	-56-
Figure 31: Adrenal adenoma in a 60-year-old man with non-small cell lung cancer	-57-
Figure 32: Myelolipoma in a 72-year-old woman with a history of metastatic endometrial carcinoma. Axial and coronal CT, PET and fused PET-CT images show a left adrenal mass	-58-
Figure 33: Metastatic disease in an 86-year-old man with metastatic melanoma and a history of prostate cancer	-60-
Figure 34: Metastatic disease in a 62-year-old man with a history of melanoma	-62-
Figure 35: Metastatic adrenal nodule from renal cell carcinoma in a 61-year-old man.....	-62-
Figure 36: Example of PET-positive adrenal mass in 64-year-old man with gastric carcinoma and 2.6-cm adrenal metastatic lesion.....	-63-
Figure 37: Metastatic adrenal mass from lung adenocarcinoma in a 52-year-old man.	-64-
Figure 38: Adrenal adenoma in a 50-year-old man with lung adenocarcinoma.....	-65-
Figure 39: Lymphomatous adrenal gland involvement in a 23-year-old woman with Burkitt lymphoma of the left breast. Axial and coronal CT , PET and fused PET-CT images show a 2 x 1-cm mass in the right adrenal gland.....	-66-
Figure 40: Collision tumors in a 46-year-old man with a history of high-grade leiomyosarcoma of the right spermatic cord. Axial and coronal unenhanced CT , PET and fused PET-CT images show a well-circumscribed 25-mm mass in the superior portion of the left adrenal gland.....	-67-
Figure 41: Pheochromocytoma in a 42-year-old man with hypertension. The patient had a contraindication to MR imaging, and PET-CT was performed	-70-

List of figures (cont.)

Figure 42: A right adrenocortical carcinoma in a 65-year-old woman was found in a routine health checkup and was confirmed by simultaneous measurements of late-afternoon serum cortisol and ACTH levels.....	-71-
Figure 43: False-positive adrenal adenoma at integrated PET-CT performed in a 63-year-old woman with lung adenocarcinoma.....	-72-
Figure 44: Adrenal pheochromocytoma with increased FDG uptake at integrated PET-CT performed in a 33-year-old woman with multiple endocrine neoplasia type II A.....	-73-
Figure 45: False-negative adrenal nodule at integrated PET-CT performed in a 59-year-old man with lung adenocarcinoma with a predominantly bronchioloalveolar carcinoma component.....	-74-
Figure 46: False-negative metastatic adrenal nodule at integrated PET-CT performed in a 55-year-old man with hepatocellular carcinoma.....	-75-
Figure 47: False-negative metastatic adrenal nodule at integrated PET-CT performed in a 58-year-old man with lung carcinoma.....	-75-
Figure 48: Nonneoplastic hypermetabolic activity.....	-77-

INTRODUCTION

Incidental adrenal masses are identified in approximately 5% of abdominal CT scans and in up to 8.7% of autopsies (Boland et al., 1998).

In patients without a known malignancy, most of these masses represent adrenal adenomas. Even in patients with a known malignancy, most of the masses are benign (Mansmaun et al., 2004).

The adrenal glands are a common site of metastatic disease. Even in a patient with a known malignancy other than an adrenal malignancy, however, an adrenal lesion is still more likely to be benign than to be malignant (Blake et al., 2006).

The issue of differentiation between benign and malignant adrenal lesions on CT has been the scope of many previous articles. The presence of intracytoplasmic lipid within adenomas has been found to accurately separate adenomas from malignant lesions (Boland et al., 1998).

Despite the high specificity of CT parameters enabling diagnosis of lipid-rich adenomas with a high degree of certainty, approximately 30% of adenomas are lipid poor, with higher attenuation values overlapping those of other adrenal masses, including malignancies (Metser et al., 2006).

Since its introduction in 1998, dual-modality PET/CT imaging has received great attention in the medical community. For the first time, patients can be examined with both CT and PET in a single examination (Beyer et al., 2004).

PET/CT tomographs represent a hardware approach to image fusion by merging the components of commercially available PET and

CT tomographs into a single gantry .Patients are scheduled for a single scan and receive 2 complementary examinations (PET and CT) whenever clinically indicated (Beyer et al., 2006).

PET/CT offers a unique hybrid imaging technique that combines the attenuation and morphologic detail of CT with the metabolic information from PET. These images can be fused to allow accurate coregistration of anatomic and functional data, and the combination of the two types of images leads to more assured anatomic localization of areas of increased metabolic activity (Blake et al., 2006).

Several advantages are associated with combined PET/CT imaging compared with retrospective or prospective software-based approaches to align complementary image data. Most important, the patient undergoing a combined PET/CT examinations is not moved physically (except for the translation of the bed) between CT and PET acquisition, thus limiting misalignment from repositioning (Beyer et al., 2004).

With the advent of PET/CT imaging, the metabolic information obtained with fluorine 18 (^{18}F) fluorodeoxyglucose (FDG) PET can be combined with the morphologic information obtained with CT. With combined PET-CT, the superimposition of the precise structural findings provided by CT allows more accurate and reproducible correlation of a hypermetabolic focus seen at PET with the correct anatomic or pathologic equivalent (Kapoor et al., 2004).

There are PET-CT appearances of the major subtypes of adrenal disease, including benign neoplastic lesions, malignancy and benign mimics of neoplasia (e.g brown fat) (Elaini et al., 2007).

Although the fusion of the two independent data sets results in both a more comprehensive examination and more accurate localization of abnormalities, it also introduces some unique potential pitfalls and interpretative difficulties. Again, this situation is especially true in the abdomen and pelvis, where physiologic FDG uptake can be

misleading and CT has tissue characterization limitations, especially following surgery (Blake et al., 2006).

AIM OF THE WORK

To illustrate common benign adrenal lesions at PET CT and the use of PET-CT in the differentiation of benign from malignant adrenal lesions.

ANATOMY OF ADRENAL GLAND

The adrenal glands are, despite their small size, among the most important and vital organs in the body. Their function was quite unknown until 1855, when Addison first described the syndrome resulting from their destruction. In 1856 Brown-Sequard showed that their removal led to death in animals (*Sutton, And Philip J. A. Robinson 2002*).

DEVELOPMENT

The suprarenal (adrenal) cortex is formed during the second month by a proliferation of the coelomic epithelium (*Standring et al., 2008*).

The adrenal gland lies retroperitoneally above each kidney. They are each enclosed within the peri-renal fascia but in a separate compartment from the kidney. The adrenal gland has an outer cortex derived from mesoderm and an inner medulla which is derived from the neural crest and is related to the sympathetic nervous system (*Ryan et al., 2004*).

At birth the glands are comparatively larger and are approximately one-third the size of the ipsilateral kidney. The cortex of each gland reduces in size immediately after birth and the medulla grows comparatively little. By the end of the second month the weight of the suprarenal has reduced by 50%. The glands begin to grow by the end of the second year and regain their weight at birth by puberty. There is little further weight increase in adult life (*Standring et al., 2008*).

MACROSCOPICALLY

The glands are macroscopically slightly different in external appearance. The right gland is pyramidal in shape and has two well-developed lower projections (limbs) giving a cross-sectional appearance similar to a broad-headed arrow. The left gland has a more semilunar form and is flattened in the anteroposterior plane. The left gland is marginally larger than the right. The bulk of the right suprarenal sits on

the apex of the right kidney and usually lies slightly higher than the left gland, which is on the anteromedial aspect of the upper pole of the left kidney (*Standring et al., 2008*).

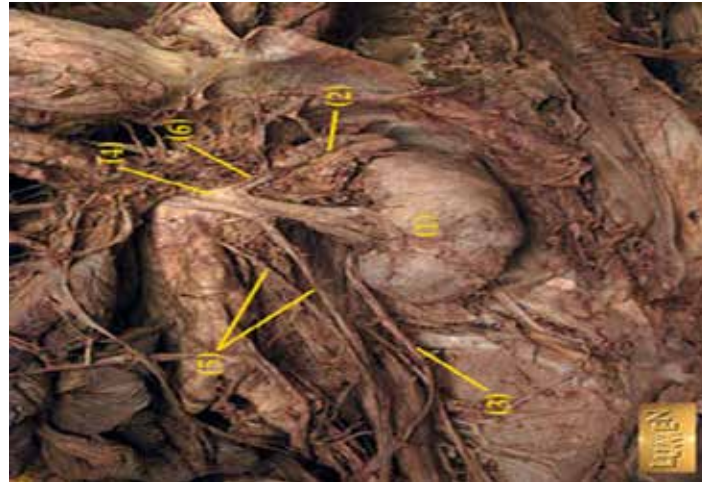


Figure 1: Normal anatomy: Kidney (1) Adrenals (2) (*Quoted from Chandrasekhar et al., 2006*)

The suprarenal (adrenal) glands lie immediately superior and slightly anterior to the upper pole of either kidney. Golden yellow in colour, each gland possesses two functionally and structurally distinct areas: an outer cortex and an inner medulla. The glands are surrounded by connective tissue containing perinephric fat and they are enclosed within the renal fascia. They are separated from the kidneys by a small amount of fibrous tissue. In the adult the glands measure c.50 mm vertically, 30 mm transversely and 10 mm antero-posteriorly. They each weight 0.5 gm. The dimensions of the suprarenal glands *in vivo* have been defined by *Vincent and colleagues (1994)* using computed tomography (CT). The mean dimensions of the body of the suprarenal gland are 0.61 cm (right) and 0.79 cm (left). The mean dimensions of suprarenal limbs are 0.28 cm (right) and 0.33 cm (left). No individual suprarenal limb should measure more than 6.5 mm across (*Standring et al., 2008*).

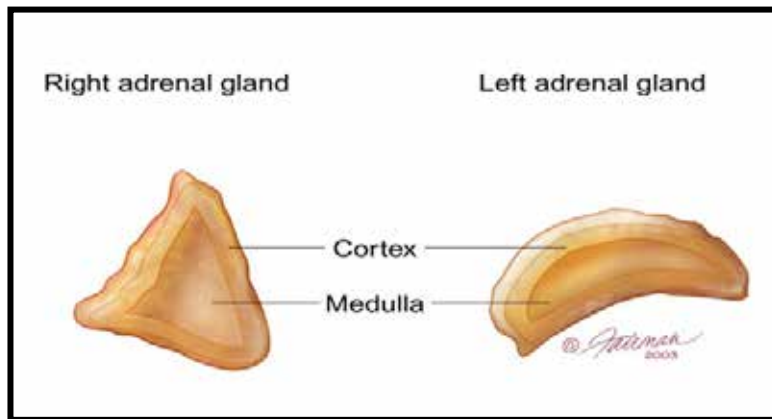


Figure 2; External appearance of adrenals (*Quoted from [www. Urology Health.org](http://www.UrologyHealth.org) Anatomical Drawings*)

VARIANTS

Small masses of adrenal cortical tissue called Cortical Bodies are often found near the adrenal glands. These may become attached to other organs early in embryology and migrate with these organs to be found in such places as in the broad ligament of the uterus , the spermatic cord and even the epididymis (*Ryan et al., 2004*).

Small accessory suprarenal glands composed mainly of cortical tissue may occur in the areolar tissue near the main suprarenal glands (*Standring et al., 2008*).

ARTERIAL SUPPLY

The suprarenal glands are very vascular. Each gland is supplied by superior, middle and inferior suprarenal arteries, whose main branches may be duplicated or even multiple (*Standring et al., 2008*).

1. Superior suprarenal arteries

The superior suprarenal artery arises from the inferior phrenic artery, which is a branch of the abdominal aorta .It is often small and may be absent (*Standring et al., 2008*).

2. Middle suprarenal arteries

The middle suprarenal artery arises from the lateral aspect of the abdominal aorta, at the level of the superior mesenteric artery. It ascends