

MANAGEMENT OF A BREAST LUMP

Carla Casulo, M.D.

Week 8

Educational Objectives:

1. Be familiar with the causes of breast lumps in women
2. Distinguish the features of benign and malignant breast abnormalities
3. Understand the management of a breast lump in a woman of any age

CASE ONE:

You are the Attending in a university hospital's outpatient medicine clinic. A 31-year-old female resident comes to see you for an urgent care visit. She appears worried and tells you, "I was performing my monthly breast exam in the shower one week after my period ended, as I always have, when I noticed a lump in my left breast that was never there before."

You examine the patient and confirm her findings, noting the presence of an approximately 2 cm, firm, but mobile mass in the left breast. The rest of her physical exam, including vital signs and lymph nodes, is normal.

Questions:

1. What is your differential diagnosis at this point? What information would you need to help you distinguish between benign disease versus malignancy?

2. Now that you have formulated your differential diagnosis, what should you do next? Do you think she is at increased risk of breast cancer?

CASE 2:

The next week you see a 61-year-old woman in your office for a physical. She has no significant past medical or family history. She does not smoke, drink or consume drugs. Her physical exam is benign except that on breast exam you palpate a vague nodular thickening in her right breast, about 1 cm in size, in the axillary tail.

3. **Would your management approach change now? If so, how?**

4. **You obtain a mammography for your patient and the results are negative. Are you satisfied? What should you do next?**

Bonus Question:

5. **Why is it important for the first patient to have performed the CBE one week after the menstrual cycle?**

Primary References:

1. Klein, S. Evaluation of Palpable Breast Masses. *American Family Physician*. 2005;71:1731-1738.
2. Santen et al., Benign Breast Disorders. *New England Journal of Medicine*. 2005; 353:275-285.

Additional References:

3. Pruthi, S., Detection and Evaluation of a Palpable Breast Mass. *Mayo Clinic Proc*. 2001; 76: 641-648.
4. Kerikowske, et al., Evaluation of Abnormal Mammography Results and Palpable Breast Abnormalities. *Annals of Internal Medicine*. 2003; 139:274-284.