Lauren Becknell Chapter 18 Pathology Report

**Cushing Syndrome**

Cushing syndrome is a group of signs and symptoms produced by excess cortisol from the adrenal cortex. The most common cause is the use of oral corticosteroid medication (sometimes known as hypercortisolism). The condition can also occur when your body makes too much cortisol, or by tumors that produce cortisol or adrenocorticotropic hormone (ACTH).

There are a number of signs and symptoms that can occur as a result of increased cortisol secretion which include rapid weight gain, obesity, a rounding moon-like shaped face, fatty tissue between the shoulders and neck (buffalo hump), muscle weakness, thin skin with bruises and stretch marks, hyperglycemia, hypernatremia, hypokalemia, osteoporosis, virilization, and hypertension. Patients also frequently suffer various psychological disturbances, ranging from euphoria to psychosis. Depression and anxiety are also common.

Cushing's disease refers to one specific cause of the syndrome: a tumor (adenoma) in the pituitary gland that produces large amounts of ACTH, which elevates cortisol. It’s the most common cause of Cushing's syndrome, responsible for 70% of cases excluding glucocorticoid related cases. In clinical cases most cases result from chronic use of cortisone-like drugs, such as steroids. Examples are the cases in young athletes seeking to improve their performance and in patients treated for autoimmune disorders, asthma, kidney, and skin conditions.

There are several ways to detect Cushing’s syndrome. One way is to have the urine or saliva tested for 24 hours. Another is a dexamethasone suppression test (administration of dexamethasone and frequent determination of cortisol and ACTH level). If any of these tests turn out positive then CT scanning of the adrenal gland and MRI of the pituitary gland are performed to detect the presence of any adrenal or pituitary tumors.

Most Cushing's syndrome cases are caused by steroid medications. In this case, most patients are effectively treated by carefully tapering off the medication that causes the symptoms. If any tumors are detected they should be surgically removed. Removal of the adrenals in the absence of a known tumor is occasionally performed to eliminate the production of excess cortisol.

Sources:

Pages 766-767 of text book

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cushing's\_syndrome