ANSWER TO PHOTO QUIZ

An unusual finding on a chest X-ray

Keywords - accessory lobe, azygos lobe

The azygos lobe

The azygos lobe, first described by Heinrich Wrisberg in 1877, is a rare, but normal anatomic variant of the right upper lobe.[1] It is found in 1% of anatomic specimens and approximately 0.4% of chest radiographs.[2,3] The azygos lobe is not a true accessory lobe as it does not correspond to a distinct anatomical bronchopulmonary segment.[2,3] The anomaly is formed by a persisting lateral position of the azygos vein during embryological development, which separates the dome of the pleura into two compartments. As a result, the right upper lobe is split in two, with the medial side presenting the accessory azygos lobe.[1] Clinical importance is limited to possible diagnostic difficulties, as the accessory lobe may be mistaken for a bulla, abscess, pulmonary node or lung mass in case of a consolidated azygos lobe.[3] Also thoracic surgery may prove more difficult in the presence of an azygos lobe.[4] Physicians need to be aware of this normal variant when interpreting a chest X-ray or when preparing for thoracic surgery.

Figure 2. Computed tomography of the chest

References

2. Boyden EA. The distribution of bronchi in gross anomalies of the right upper lobe, particularly lobes subdivided by the azygos vein and those containing pre-eparterial bronchi. Radiology. 1952;58:797-807.