

Letters to the Editor

Sildenafil (Viagra™) May Cause Nasal Stuffiness

To the Editor: Sildenafil (Viagra™) has recently been officially licensed for use in the USA as well as in Europe.¹ It is also being used in Saudi Arabia in a few selected hospitals. There is an ongoing debate on its use, possible complications and side effects in the Kingdom.²⁻⁴ The recommended normal dose is 50 mg half an hour to 4 hours before intended sexual intercourse.⁵ As it is a new drug and not much is known about its safety, we have alerted all our medical doctors to record and report any untoward effect in patients using sildenafil.

Recently, we came across a group of four patients who had used 25 mg of sildenafil for intended sexual intercourse. One of the patients reported nasal stuffiness which was so severe that he was unable to breathe through the nose. The patient described the feeling as being similar to having the nose plugged with cotton wool. A similar experience was noted by another subject who had to forgo the act and take antihistamine tablets instead. The other two subjects had nasal stuffiness but went ahead with their endeavor. The subjects noted that the effect subsided after about four to six hours. None of them developed a headache, flushing, palpitations, etc. None of the subjects had a history of asthma, allergic rhinitis or aspirin intake. However, all the subjects reported a reasonably good erection.

Sildenafil is a phosphodiesterase5 inhibitor, and its effect has been reported to be specific for corpus spongiosum. It is possible that a similar phosphodiesterase might be present in the blood vessels of the nasal mucosa. In both areas, vascularity and vasodynamics are important in producing erection in the former, and regulating the temperature of inhaled air in the latter. As both phenomena are parasympathetically mediated, further research is required. Side effects have been reported in 6%-18% of subjects using sildenafil, and consist mainly of headache, flushing and dyspepsia.⁶ The hypotensive effect of nitrates is potentiated by sildenafil and, therefore, should be used with caution in patients on these drugs.⁵ As nasal stuffiness has not been reported as a side effect in Saudi Arabia so far, we hope that this information will be useful for concerned physicians and patients.

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Cardiac Angiosarcoma Presenting as Right Heart Failure Secondary to Pulmonary Vascular Carcinomatosis

To the Editor: We read with interest the article by Bahammam on cardiac angiosarcoma presenting as right heart failure secondary to pulmonary vascular carcinomatosis.¹ We have seen a similar case of cardiac angiosarcoma presenting as pulmonary embolism. A 21-year-old man had a pulmonary mass of the right middle lobe (Figure 1) and presented with fever, expectoration of pus and hemoptysis. Chest x-ray revealed a bulging of the right border of the heart, and right lobectomy was performed. A pathologist diagnosed a pulmonary infarct. The patient died suddenly, and at necropsy, there was a huge intracardiac tumor which was an angiosarcoma, with multiple metastatic emboli in both lungs.

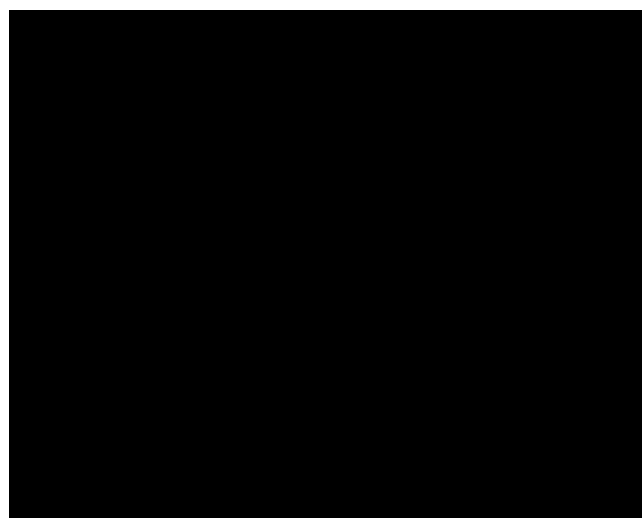


FIGURE 1. Round solid mass of the right middle lobe. Convexity of the lower part of the right border of the heart.

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