

The Case of the Missing Coin: An unexpected Discovery of a Nasal Foreign Body

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Abstract

Foreign objects are a relatively common finding in nasal passages. Often the patient maybe unaware of these and seeks medical help due to symptoms of pain, discharge, swelling etc. In rare cases they may be discovered as incidental findings during a different diagnostic test or procedure in that area. In this report a coin was discovered on dental radiographs taken during an orthodontic diagnostic workup.

Keywords: Foreign Object; Dental Radiograph; Cephalogram; Orthopantomogram; Nasal Passage; Orthodontic Diagnosis

Introduction

Foreign objects are a relatively common finding in body orifices and passages, including the head and neck region. Often the patient maybe unaware of these and seeks medical help due to symptoms of pain, discharge, swelling etc. In rare cases they may be discovered as incidental findings during a different diagnostic test or procedure in that area.

Case History

A healthy ten year old boy, presented to the orthodontic office for treatment of crooked teeth. Medical and dental history was reported as unremarkable. Extra and intraoral examination was also unremarkable except for the dental malocclusion. Prior to start of orthodontic treatment diagnostic records were taken that included the Orthopantomogram and Lateral Cephalogram.

On reviewing the radiographs, an unusual radio opaque object was seen on both radiographs (Figure 1 and Figure 2). An additional radiograph, a Posterior Anterior Cephalogram was taken to help with the location and identification of the object (Figure 3). The object appeared to be circular with the shape of a disc and a distinct boundary located in the left posterior nasal passage just above the floor. It was not consistent with normal anatomy or a commonly known pathology of the region. Both patient and parent were shown the radiographs to shed some light on what may have transpired but they remembered nothing un-

usual in the past. Referral for further evaluation and treatment was made to the otolaryngologist. The surgeon confirmed the presence of the object with endoscopy and was able to remove the object uneventfully as an outpatient. The object was found to be a silver coin 18 mm in diameter (Figure 4). On showing this to the patient he had no recollection of ever shoving this up his nostril or mouth. Orthodontic treatment continued.



Figure 1: Lateral Cephalogram.

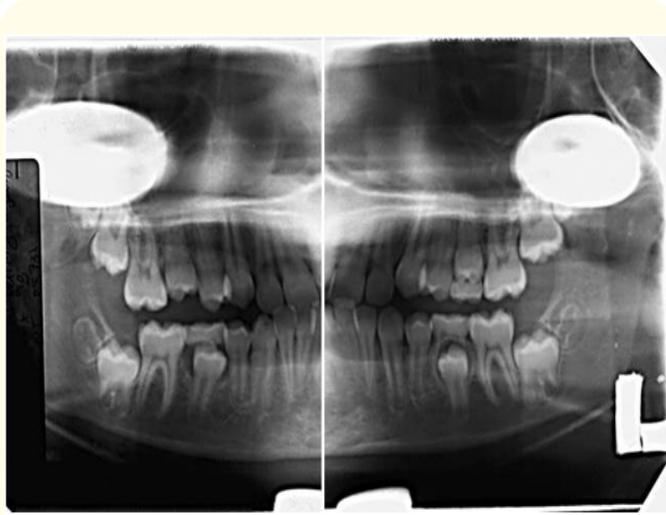


Figure 2: Orthopantomogram.



Figure 4: Retrieved coin from nasal cavity.

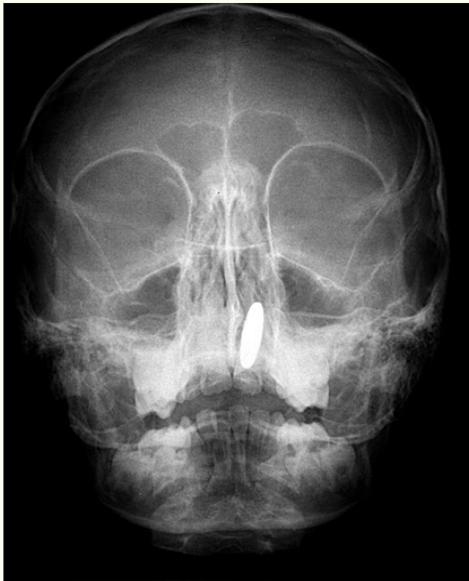


Figure 3: Posterior Anterior Cephalogram.

Discussion

Dental radiographs can play a useful role in identifying pathology in the head and neck area that may otherwise remain undiscovered. Extra Oral radiographs such as the Orthopantomogram and Cephalograms provides information not only of the jaws and the dentition, but other structures and passages including the airway. This was a case of a relatively benign nature with a successful outcome. However it could have been a more insidious sinister pathology.

Conclusion

As dental professionals our education and training goes beyond the oral cavity and teeth. Often we are the first of the health professionals to see a problem related to other parts of the body. The clinician should be cognizant of anything atypical on the examination and radiographs. Here the orthodontist was able to play an important role and provide an additional service to the patient.

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Conflict of Interest

None.

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