

THE AFP TRAP: PANCREATIC ACINAR CELL CARCINOMA MASQUERADING AS HEPATOBLASTOMA IN A 4-YEAR-OLD CHILD

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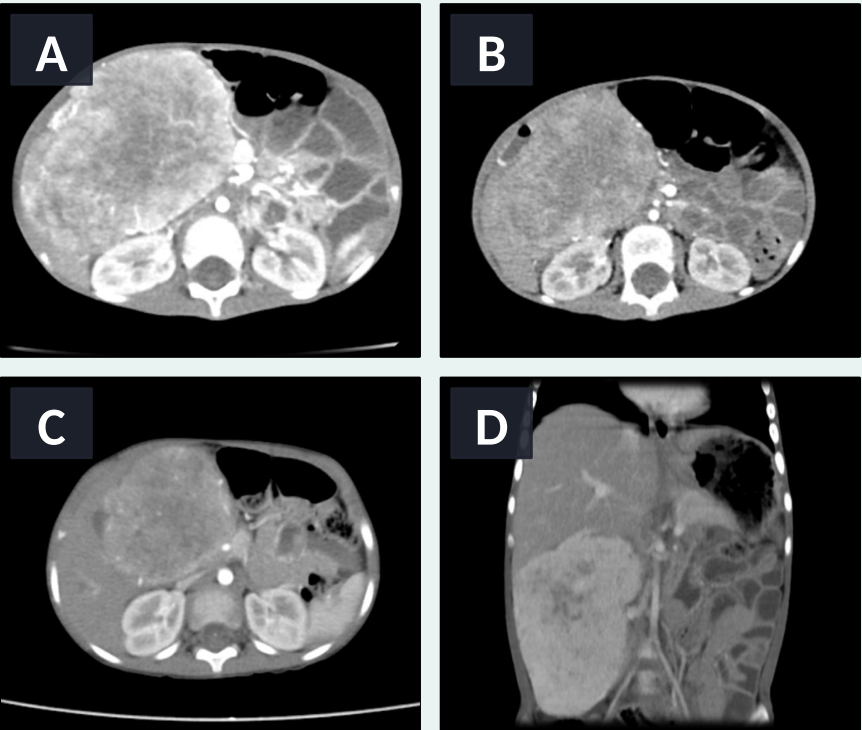
Introduction

Pancreatic **acinar cell carcinoma (ACC)** is rare in children: fewer than 30 cases reported.¹ Up to 25% secrete **AFP** and can mimic hepatoblastoma.² **Aim:** to highlight this diagnostic trap.

Case Presentation

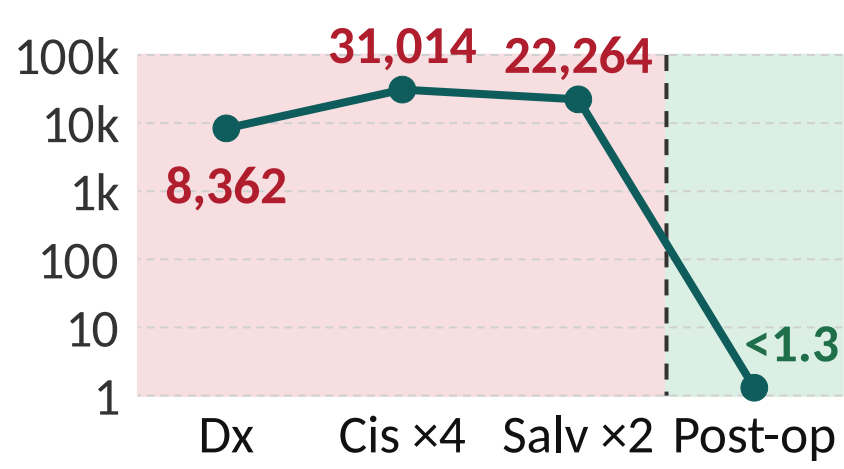
- **4-year-old boy**; 5 weeks of pain, vomiting, weight loss
- Right-sided mass crossing the midline
- AFP **8,361.6 ng/mL**; β -hCG normal
- CT: exophytic mass, apparently hepatic (IVb/V/VI)
- Trucut: Cam 5.2 +, **Hep-Par-1 -**, **Glypican-3 -**; trypsin/BCL10 **not tested**
- Treated as **hepatoblastoma**

Imaging



(A) Interim, (B) reassessment, (C) pre-op, (D) coronal: apparently hepatic mass, unchanged on chemotherapy.

AFP Trend

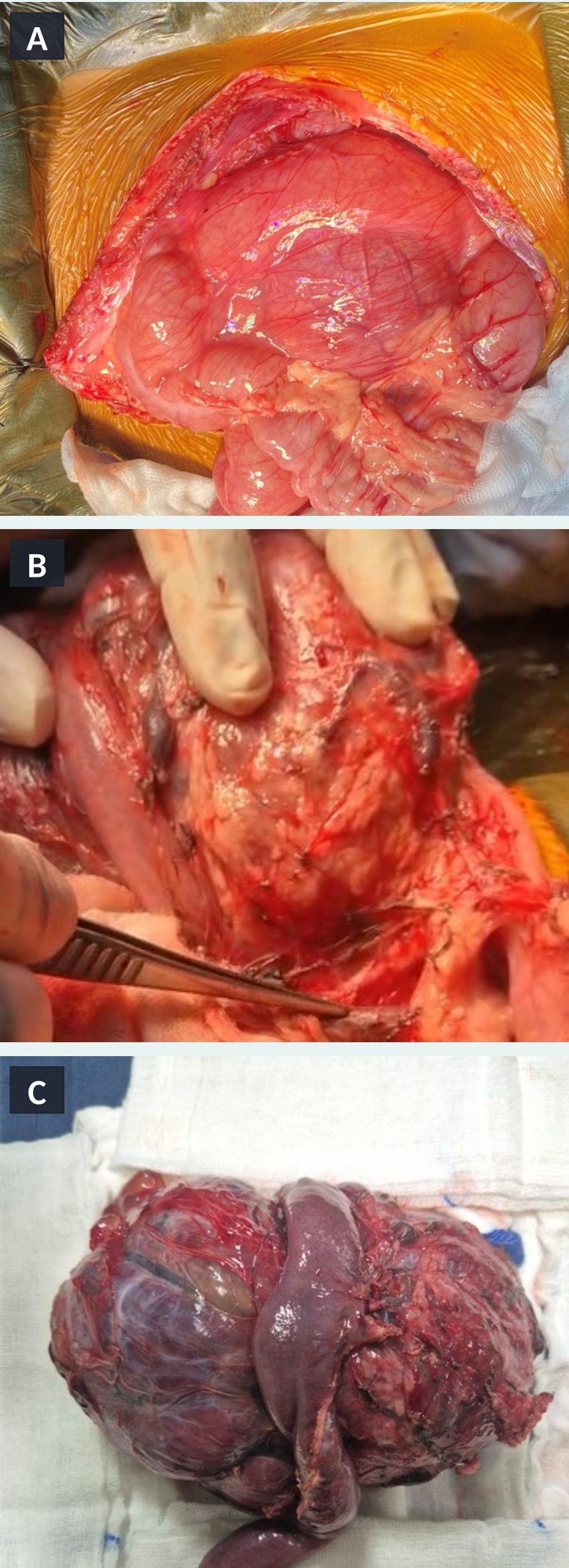


AFP (ng/mL, log) rose on cisplatin and salvage chemo; **normal after Whipple**.

Surgical Intervention

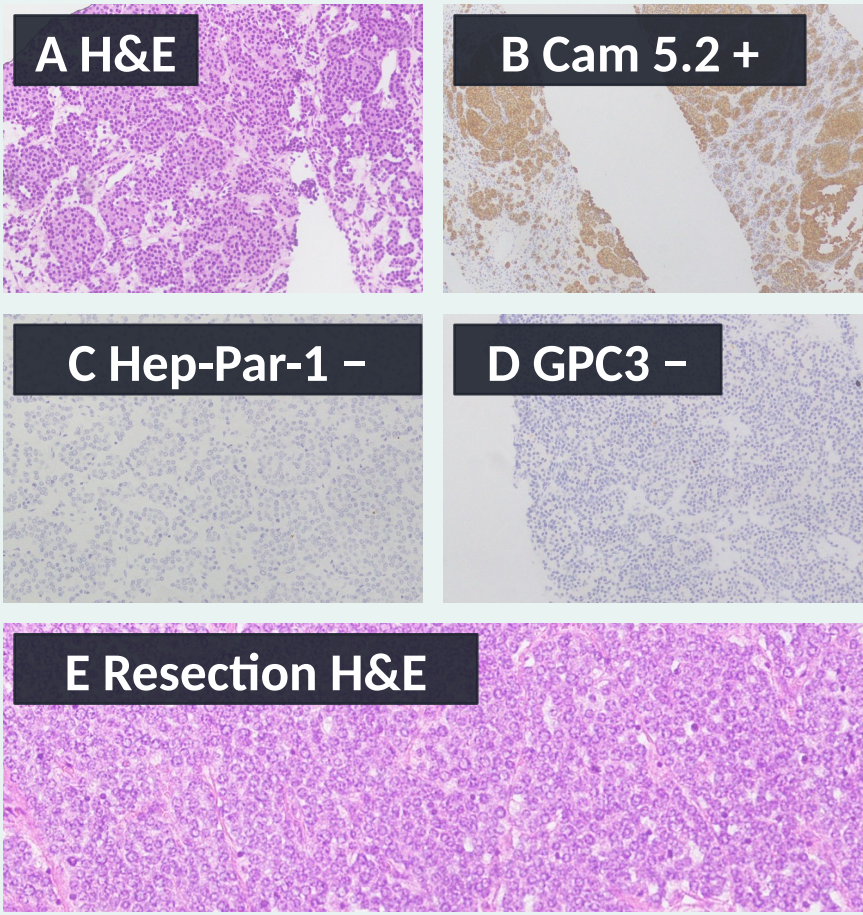
- Rooftop laparotomy: 12 × 8 cm mass from the **pancreatic head**, not the liver
- Replaced right hepatic artery from SMA; PV and SMA preserved
- **Pylorus-preserving pancreaticoduodenectomy**; margins clear

Operative Findings



(A) Exposure at laparotomy; (B) dissection of the pancreatic head tumour; (C) specimen with duodenum.

Histopathology & IHC



- Biopsy (A-D): hepatocytic markers negative
- Resection: **trypsin ?** and **BCL10** ; β -catenin -; no squamoid nests → **ACC³**

Outcome

- AFP **< 1.3 ng/mL** after resection
- 6 cycles modified FOLFIRINOX; child well on surveillance

Conclusion / Take-Home

- AFP-secreting ACC can mimic hepatoblastoma; a complete IHC panel prevents a delayed diagnosis
- **Raised AFP ≠ hepatoblastoma**
- **Hep-Par-1/GPC3 negative?** Add trypsin and BCL10
- **Rising AFP on chemo:** question the diagnosis
- **Whipple is feasible** in young children⁴

References

1. Morikawa M, et al. Int Cancer Conf J. 2016;5:140–5.
2. Prabhu A, et al. J Indian Assoc Pediatr Surg. 2016;21:84–6.
3. Manfrin E, et al. Pathol Res Pract. 2021;226:153593.
4. Lindholm EB, et al. J Pediatr Surg. 2017;52:299–303.