Clinical picture

Lung whiteout with normal chest signs

This 72-year-old man presented with a history of headache. Chest examination was unremarkable. Routine chest X-ray revealed a complete whiteout of the left hemithorax. Further imaging and ultrasound of the chest failed to demonstrate the presence of fluid, but there was extensive pleural thickening. Biopsy of pleural tissue showed histology consistent with advanced mesothelioma, and the patient had a previous history of asbestos exposure.

Complete whiteout of the lung is not always synonymous with either a massive pleural effusion or complete collapse of the lung. A high index of suspicion is required for this unusual cause of a complete lung whiteout, especially in the absence of any chest signs.

Photograph and text from: Drs D.K.C. Lee, G.K.J. Sleat and P.S. Borade, Department of Internal Medicine, Ipswich Hospital, Ipswich, UK. email: dkclee@doctors.org.uk

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