Introduction

Catecholamine-producing tumours may arise in the adrenal medulla or in extra-adrenal chromaffin cells [1]. Those which arise from the adrenal medulla are referred to as 'phaeochromocytomas' while the latter are called 'catecholamine-secreting paragangliomas' or 'extra-adrenal phaeochromocytomas' [2]. The prevalence of catecholamine-producing tumours in patients with hypertension is around 0.2% to 0.6% [3] Incidence of phaeochromocytoma is estimated to be 0.8 per 100,000 person-years but this is often considered to be an underestimate. Phaeochromocytomas may occur at any age but are most common in the fourth to fifth decade and occur equally in both sexes. In over half of the patients, the tumour is discovered incidentally during computed tomography (CT) or magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) [2].