EDITORIAL

2138 Parenteral iron therapy in children with iron deficiency anemia
Roganovic J

2143 Treatment-induced neuroendocrine prostate cancer and de novo neuroendocrine prostate cancer: Identification, prognosis and survival, genetic and epigenetic factors
Wishahi M

2147 Perioperative cardiac risks in myasthenia gravis
Nag DS, Chatterjee A, Mahanty PR, Sam M, Bharadwaj MK

2151 Management of geriatric acetabular fractures: Contemporary treatment strategies
Tosounidis T, Chalidis B

2157 Pioneering role of machine learning in unveiling intensive care unit-acquired weakness
Dragonieri S

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Case Control Study

2160 Detection and analysis of serum bile acid profile in patients with colonic polyps
Ji X, Chen H

2173 Clinical analysis of colistin sulfate in the treatment of pneumonia caused by carbapenem-resistant Gram-negative bacteria

Retrospective Cohort Study

2182 Establishment and evaluation of a prognostic model for patients with unresectable gastric cancer liver metastases
Chang ZY, Gao WX, Zhang Y, Zhao W, Wu D, Chen L

Retrospective Study

2194 Therapeutic effect of Wendan Decoction combined with mosapride on gastroesophageal reflux disease after esophageal cancer surgery
Zhang YJ, Wu SP

Clinical Trials Study

2201 Yiwei Xiaoyu granules for treatment of chronic atrophic gastritis with deficiency syndrome of the spleen and stomach
Chen WQ, Fan QF, He YJ, Li F, Wu X, Li YP, Yang XJ
## Contents

### Observational Study

2210  
**Relationship between clinical belonging, professional identity, and nursing information ability among nursing interns: Model construction**  
*Zhang G, Huang SJ, Li SF*

### META-ANALYSIS

2218  
**Efficacy and safety of Yangxinshi tablet for chronic heart failure: A systematic review and meta-analysis**  
*Lu SH, Yu YF, Dai SS, Hu YQ, Liu JH*

### CASE REPORT

2231  
**Intra-thyroid esophageal duplication cyst: A case report**  
*Lin HG, Liu M, Huang XY, Liu DS*

2237  
**Magnetic resonance imaging findings of radiation-induced breast angiosarcoma: A case report**  
*Wu WP, Lee CW*

2243  
**Rim 18F-fluorodeoxyglucose uptake of hepatic cavernous hemangioma on positron emission tomography/computed tomography: A case report**  
*Hu YA, Guo YX, Huang QF*

2248  
**Recovering from prolonged cardiac arrest induced by electric shock: A case report**  
*Zhang J, Qiao YR, Yang YD, Pan GZ, Lv CQ*

2254  
**Young patient with a giant gastric bronchogenic cyst: A case report and review of literature**  
*Lu XR, Jiao XG, Sun QH, Li BW, Zhu QS, Zhu GX, Qu JJ*

2263  
**Airway management of a patient with linear immunoglobulin A bullous dermatosis: A case report**  
*Nin OC, Hutnik R, Chheda NN, Hutchinson D*

2269  
**Deferred revascularization in diabetic patient according to combined invasive functional and intravascular imaging data: A case report**  
*Al Nooryani A, Aboushokka W, Beleslin B, Nedeljkovic-Beleslin B*

2275  
**Thymic carcinoid with multiple bone metastases: A case report**  
*Chen CQ, Huang MY, Pan M, Chen QQ, Wei FF, Huang H*

2281  
**Atypical presentation of a posterior fossa tumour: A case report**  
*Narotam A, Archary M, Naidoo P, Naidoo Y, Naidu V*

2286  
**Refractory autoimmune hemolytic anemia in a patient with systemic lupus erythematosus and ulcerative colitis: A case report**  
*Chen DX, Wu Y, Zhang SF, Yang XJ*
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CASE REPORT

Young patient with a giant gastric bronchogenic cyst: A case report and review of literature

Xu-Ren Lu, Xu-Guang Jiao, Qi-Hang Sun, Bo-Wen Li, Qing-Shun Zhu, Guang-Xu Zhu, Jian-Jun Qu

BACKGROUND

Gastric bronchogenic cysts (BCs) are extremely rare cystic masses caused by abnormal development of the respiratory system during the embryonic period. Gastric bronchial cysts are rare lesions that were first reported in 1956; as of 2023, only 33 cases are available in the PubMed online database. BCs usually have no clinical symptoms in the early stage, and imaging findings also lack specificity. Therefore, they are difficult to diagnose before histopathological examination.

CASE SUMMARY

A 34-year-old woman with respiratory distress presented at our hospital. Endoscopic ultrasound revealed an anechoic mass between the spleen, left kidney and gastric fundus, with hyperechogenic and soft elastography textures and with a size of approximately 6.5 cm × 4.0 cm. Furthermore, a computed tomography scan demonstrated high density between the posterior stomach and the spleen and the left kidney, with uniform internal density and a small amount of calcification. The maximum cross section was approximately 10.1 cm × 6.1 cm, and the possibility of a cyst was high. Because the imaging findings did not suggest a malignancy and because the patient required complete resection, she underwent laparotomy surgery. Intraoperatively, this cystic lesion was found to be located in the posterior wall of the large curvature of the fundus and was approximately 8 cm × 6 cm in size. Finally, the pathologists verified that the cyst in the fundus was a gastric BC. The patient recovered well, her symptoms of chest tightness disappeared, and the abdominal drain was removed on postoperative day 6, after which she was discharged on day 7 for 6 months of follow-up. She had no tumor recurrence or postoperative complications during the follow-up.
CONCLUSION
This is a valuable report as it describes an extremely rare case of gastric BC. Moreover, this was a very young patient with a large BC in the stomach.

Key Words: Bronchogenic cyst; Stomach; Endoscopic ultrasound-guided fine needle aspiration; Endosonography; Case report

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Core Tip: Gastric bronchogenic cysts (BCs) represent uncommon congenital anomalies, often manifesting as indistinct cystic formations on preoperative evaluations. Herein, we document a noteworthy instance of a sizable gastric BC occurring in a young female patient. The definitive diagnosis of gastric BC was established through histopathological examination following laparotomy resection. The analysis of the reported cases revealed that gastric BC often mimics gastrointestinal stromal tumors on preoperative imaging. We recommend elective radical surgical resection for young patients with large cysts, as they might progress to malignancies.

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INTRODUCTION
Bronchogenic cysts (BCs) are uncommon developmental malformations that result from the aberrant development of the primitive tracheobronchial tube, leading to the formation of cystic lesions. These lesions are typically congenital, meaning they are present at birth, and can cause various symptoms depending on their location and size[1]. The lesions can be divided into mediastinal, intrapulmonary, and ectopic types according to their location[2]. The tumor is primarily located in the mediastinum if it occurs early in gestation, as opposed to the thoracic cavity if it arises later in development[3]. Abdominal BCs, especially those situated within the gastric wall, are exceptionally uncommon occurrences[4]. Dewing et al[5] were the pioneers in describing gastric bronchial cysts in 1956, and as of 2023, only a few cases have been described in reports available in the PubMed online database. For patients with BCs, there is a wide range for the age at diagnosis, which has ranged from 17 to 81 years, and it has a higher prevalence in females, with a median age of development of 43 years[1]. BCs of the gastric region typically manifest along the posterior wall of the gastric body and the lesser curvature of the stomach[6]. In previous reports, it has been observed that a significant proportion of patients were asymptomatic [7]. However, among those who exhibited symptoms, epigastric pain and vomiting were the most prevalent[8]. Most gastric BCs are easily misdiagnosed as gastrointestinal stromal tumors (GISTs) before surgery[9]; however, fortunately, their prognosis is good[10]. In the current investigation, we have documented a rare instance of a gastric BCs occurring in a 34-year-old patient. Furthermore, we have undertaken a thorough examination of the existing literature (Table 1) to delve into the clinical manifestations associated with these cysts, aiming to contribute to a deeper understanding of their nature and incidence.

CASE PRESENTATION

Chief complaints
A 34-year-old Chinese woman presented to the gastrointestinal surgery clinic with a complaint of respiratory distress for 5 d.

History of present illness
A 34-year-old Chinese female patient presented with chest tightness and shortness of breath for 5 d with no nausea, vomiting, sour regurgitation, belching, dysphagia, melena, or weight loss.

History of past illness
She had a history of psoriasis.

Personal and family history
Her father died of lymphoma. In addition, the patient denied any family history of other malignancies.
### Table 1 Thirty-three cases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ref.</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Size (cm)</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Symptom</th>
<th>Preoperative diagnosis</th>
<th>Intervention</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Braffman et al[24], 1988</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>15 × 8</td>
<td>Posterior wall</td>
<td>Epigastric pain</td>
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<td>Resection</td>
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<tr>
<td>Matsubayashi et al [25], 2003</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>10 × 3 × 3</td>
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<td>Epigastric pain</td>
<td>Lymphangiom/benign</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hedayati et al[26], 2003</td>
<td>59</td>
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<td>7 × 5</td>
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<td>Adrenocortical cancer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rubio et al[27], 2005</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Epigastric pain</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melo et al[12], 2005</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>4 × 2.5 × 1</td>
<td>Gastric fundus</td>
<td>Rib pain</td>
<td>GIST</td>
<td>Laparoscopic resection</td>
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<tr>
<td>Song et al[28], 2005</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>Lesser curvature</td>
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<td>Benign stromal tumor</td>
<td>Resection</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wakabayashi et al [29], 2007</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Lesser curvature</td>
<td>Epigastric pain</td>
<td>A duplication cyst</td>
<td>Exploration</td>
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<td>60</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Benign cyst of the gastric submucosa</td>
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<td>Shibahara et al[17], 2009</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>9 × 4</td>
<td>Lesser curvature</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Jiang et al[30], 2010</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>3 × 2.5 × 2.0</td>
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<td>Epigastric pain</td>
<td>GIST</td>
<td>Laparotomy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tan et al[11], 2010</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>5.1 × 3.6 × 4.6</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Laparoscopic wedge resection</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kurokawa et al [31], 2013</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Gastric cardia</td>
<td>Throat discomfort</td>
<td>Cyst</td>
<td>Laparoscopic</td>
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<td>Yang and Guo[4], 2013</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>8.0 × 6.0</td>
<td>Gastric fundus</td>
<td></td>
<td>Retropertioneal mass</td>
<td>Laparotomy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yang and Guo[4], 2013</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>10 × 6</td>
<td>Posterior wall of the stomach</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Wedged gastrectomy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sun et al[32], 2015</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>4.1 × 3.2</td>
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<td>Dull epigastric pain</td>
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<td>Laparotomy</td>
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<td>Tu et al [1], 2016</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>3 × 2.5</td>
<td>Gastric cardia</td>
<td>Epigastric pain</td>
<td>Cyst</td>
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<td>Chhaidar et al[33], 2017</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>Female</td>
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<td>Epigastric pain</td>
<td>GIST</td>
<td>Total gastrectomy</td>
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<td>Xiao et al[33], 2020</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>6.4 × 4.9</td>
<td>Lesser curvature of the gastric cardia</td>
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<td>He et al[15], 2020</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>7 × 6 × 2</td>
<td>Gastric cardia</td>
<td>Intermittent epigastric pain</td>
<td>Benign cyst of the gastric submucosa</td>
<td>Da vinci robotic-assisted laparoscopic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sun et al[7], 2020</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>10 × 8 × 8</td>
<td>Fundus of stomach</td>
<td></td>
<td>Retropertioneal mass</td>
<td>Laparotomy</td>
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<td>Erbenová et al[34], 2021</td>
<td>30</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Tumor of gastric cardia</td>
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<td>Lou et al[8], 2022</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>5 × 2.6</td>
<td>Gastric fundus</td>
<td>Upper abdominal pain</td>
<td>Lymphatic cyst</td>
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<td>Wang et al[35], 2022</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3.1 × 3.0</td>
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<td>Abdominal pain and distension</td>
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<td>Li et al[36], 2022</td>
<td>35</td>
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<td>Abdomynsic Lymphangioma</td>
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<td>Upper abdominal pain</td>
<td>GIST</td>
<td>Laparoscope</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Lu XR et al. Gastric bronchogenic cyst

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<th>Author(s)</th>
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<th>Size</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Symptoms</th>
<th>Diagnosis</th>
<th>Treatment</th>
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<tr>
<td>Ma et al. [39], 2023</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>5 × 4.5 × 3.5</td>
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<td>Abdominal pain</td>
<td>GIST</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Lin and Cao [40], 2023</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>8 × 7</td>
<td>Posterior wall of the fundus</td>
<td>Pain in the right chest</td>
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<tr>
<td>Liu and Li [41], 2023</td>
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<td>Male</td>
<td>4 × 3</td>
<td>Gastric cardia</td>
<td>Blech</td>
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<td>Terayama et al. [42], 2023</td>
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<td>Female</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>Bronchogenic cyst</td>
<td>Resection</td>
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<td>Terayama et al. [42], 2023</td>
<td>47</td>
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<td>Terayama et al. [42], 2023</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>Gastric cardia</td>
<td>Asymptomatic</td>
<td></td>
<td>Resection</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

GIST: Gastrointestinal stromal tumor.

**Physical examination**
Her abdomen was smooth and flat, and there was no gastrointestinal type or mild upper abdominal tenderness without rebound pain or an overt mass. The bowel sounds were normal.

**Laboratory examinations**
No abnormalities were found in routine blood or urine analyses or liver or kidney function tests.

**Imaging examinations**
Endoscopic ultrasound (EUS) revealed a 65 mm × 40 mm single cyst. The images also showed that the cyst was located at the bottom of the gastric wall. An echogenic mass was detected between the spleen, left kidney, and gastric fundus with punctate hyperechogenicity. Elastography revealed a soft texture. These findings suggested the presence of a cyst within the stomach (Figure 1). Additionally, an enhanced computed tomography (CT) scan revealed a cystic mass measuring 101 mm × 61 mm in size. There was no contrast enhancement, and the mass was located within the posterior wall of the gastric fundus, spleen and left kidney with regular and smooth outlines. The mass appeared to have a slightly high and uniform density with a small, calcified shadow in the posterior gastric region. No septation was observed. It also showed an extraluminal growth pattern with an obvious border, and the gastric wall was affected by pressure (Figure 2). Moreover, no significant enlargement of lymph nodes was observed in the vicinity of the stomach or retroperitoneal region. Before surgery, an EUS examination was performed to determine which layer of the gastric wall the cyst had originated from. However, because the cyst wall was evaluated by CT, because there was calcification on the cyst wall, and because the contents of the cyst were mainly liquid components according to the density, there was concern that fine needle aspiration (FNA) may cause rupture of the cyst before surgery and would increase the risk of infection. Second, we suspected that the patient's chest tightness was caused by compression of the diaphragm muscle by the large cyst. To eliminate the patient's symptoms and because the patient strongly desired surgery, after consultation and discussion with many experts, we decided to prudently remove the cyst and obtain a complete pathological specimen so that a safe postoperative examination could be performed to obtain the most accurate diagnosis. Based on these two points, we did not use preoperative FNA.

**FINAL DIAGNOSIS**
After treatment, the patient's symptoms of chest tightness resolved. We suspected that the chest tightness was due to the large cyst exerting pressure on the diaphragm. Based on the obtained specimen, this mass was approximately 80 mm × 50 mm × 40 mm in size. Under microscopic examination, the cyst lining exhibited pseudostratified ciliated columnar epithelial cells, while the cyst wall displayed smooth muscle and small salivary gland tissue. Immunohistochemical staining revealed the following results: CK7 (+) TTF-1 (partial +), NapsinA (+), CK20 (+), Villin (-), SMA (+), Desmin (+), P63 (+), and elastic fiber (+) (Figure 3). The pathologists conclusively confirmed that the cystic mass located in the fundus was indeed gastric BCs.

**TREATMENT**
Given the young age of the patient, the large cyst with prominent gastric wall compression and chest tightness could have been associated with the cystic mass, and given that the patient wished to have the lesion completely removed, the patient underwent intra-abdominal mass resection under general anesthesia and nerve block anesthesia. Intraoperative observations of this cystic mass revealed it to be a smooth, single-port cyst originating from the posterior wall of the gastric fundus and extending along the greater curvature. Surgical exploration revealed no intra-abdominal ascites or
Figure 1 Imaging at admission. Endoscopic ultrasound revealed a 6.5 cm × 4.0 cm single cyst. The cyst, without any echoes or color flow signals, was located in the posterior wall of the gastric body. These results indicated the possibility of a cyst of the stomach.

Figure 2 Imaging at admission. A: An enhanced computed tomography scan demonstrated a 10.1 cm × 6.1 cm mass. The mass was present in the posterior part of the stomach between the spleen and the left kidney; a large, slightly high-density swelling shadow with uniform internal density was shown; and a small calcification shadow could be seen at the rear. The computer tomography (CT) value was approximately 70 HU, and the gastric wall was compressed and changed; B: Noncontrast CT image; C: It can be clearly seen from the sagittal position that the diaphragm was compressed by the mass.

obvious abnormalities in the liver, abdominal wall, pelvic cavity, omenta, or mesentery. The cystic mass was then completely dissected from the stomach. It is worth noting that surgeons need to avoid cyst rupture during these types of surgery.

OUTCOME AND FOLLOW-UP

The patient recovered well, her symptoms of chest tightness completely disappeared, and the abdominal drain was removed on postoperative day 6, after which she was discharged on day 7 for 6 months of follow-up. The patient had no tumor recurrence or postoperative complications that occurred after surgery.

DISCUSSION

To conduct a comprehensive study on BCs of the stomach, a systematic literature review was undertaken using the PubMed database. The search was focused on articles published in English and employed the keyword "gastric BCs" to identify relevant studies. The final date for data collection was set as December 2023. The inclusion criteria stipulated that all patients must have a confirmed diagnosis of gastric BCs through pathological examination. Additionally, patients exhibiting imaging characteristics typical of gastric BCs were included, irrespective of age and sex. Conversely, patients
BCs are primitive-foregut-derived congenital cystic abnormalities[11]. Migration of BCs may ensue when their attachments to the trachea or esophagus fail to persist, resulting in their potential displacement within the anatomical structures of the body[12]. The primary sites of occurrence for BCs predominantly involve the thoracic region, notably within the mediastinum. However, on rare occasions, they may also manifest in the subdiaphragmatic region. BC of the stomach appears to be a disease detected at all ages (from 17 to 76 years of age), and there was no apparent sex difference (17 females and 16 males). The dimensions of BCs exhibited considerable variability, ranging from 1.7 to 15 cm, as indicated by available data from our cases and referenced literature. However, the majority of cyst diameters fell within the range of 3 to 7 cm. Regarding localization, our investigation revealed a predilection for cysts to be situated in the gastric cardia or posterior wall of the fundus. A large proportion of patients with BC have clinical manifestations of epigastric pain, while others generally experience nonspecific symptoms, which may be due to local tumor compression and infection[13]. Notably, four patients with gastric BC had elevated tumor marker levels. Elevated CA19-9 levels were present in two of the patients[10,14], and elevated CA72-4 levels were also present in patients with elevated CA72-4 levels[15,16]. Interestingly, these elevated tumor markers returned to normal after surgery, suggesting that there is a direct relationship between benign BCs and elevated tumor marker levels. However, the relationship between tumor markers and BC needs further study. It is worth noting that BCs of the stomach have been associated with the presence of gastric carcinoma. Chronic inflammation of the gastric mucosa, stemming from BCs, may have contributed to the development of these adenocarcinomas in the stomach, as reported in previous studies[17]. While the current investigation illustrates that EUS and other imaging modalities can aid in localizing the lesion, they are limited in their ability to offer qualitative diagnostic insights. Accurate preoperative diagnosis is challenging, and most patients are easily misdiagnosed with GIST. In summary, preoperative diagnosis of gastric BCs is challenging due to the absence of specific clinical manifestations, as well as inconclusive findings from laboratory tests and imaging studies. Moreover, the rarity of these lesions further complicates their diagnosis.

BCs are commonly detected through CT and magnetic resonance imaging (MRI). However, relying solely on imaging techniques to differentiate them from other types of cysts can be challenging due to the presence of similar radiological features among various cystic lesions. Ubukata et al[18] demonstrated that far greater clarity was achieved when using MRI than when using CT, especially for identifying the contents of the cystic lesions. In the present case, since the patient had metal dental implants, this patient was not suitable to undergo MRI. EUS is commonly employed to ascertain the specific layer of the gastric wall from which the lesion originates and to delineate its approximate location within the gastrointestinal tract[15]. Imaging alone cannot usually distinguish between nonneoplastic lesions and benign or malignant neoplasms. In clinically warranted situations, EUS-FNA biopsy has been previously established as a valuable tool for the unequivocal diagnosis of gastric BCs[19]. Its effectiveness is further emphasized by its sensitivity range of 86%-93%[20], diagnostic accuracy spanning 82%-95%, and an exceptionally low complication rate of merely 1%-3%[21].

Figure 3 Histopathological analysis and immunohistochemical examination of the resected specimen. A: Microscopically, pseudostratified ciliated columnar epithelial cells could be observed in the cyst lining, and smooth muscle and small salivary gland tissue could be observed in the cyst; B: Napsin A (+); C: CK20 (-); D: P63 (+); E: SMA (+); F: Desmin (+); G: CK7 (+); H: TTF-1 (+); I: Elastic fiber (+).
Although the probability of complications is extremely low, there are risks of ulceration, infection and hemorrhage. EUS-FNA provides a new diagnostic and treatment approach for asymptomatic gastric BC patients. We recommend that EUS-FNA be performed first for elderly patients, patients in poor physical condition, asymptomatic patients, and patients who cannot undergo surgical treatment for various reasons in the short term; then subsequent treatment options should be discussed based on the results.

Through our systematic review of existing cases, we conclude that GIST is the most common preoperative diagnosis of gastro BCs. The two conditions are difficult to distinguish by imaging, and an accurate preoperative diagnosis can be obtained via EUS-FNA before surgery. However, there are risks such as infection and bleeding. During the operation, these masses can be distinguished by observing their nature. GISTs are brittle and prone to bleeding, while gastro BCs are composed mainly of cystic components. Second, due to the rarity of BCs, clinicians lack understanding of this disease, which is also one of the reasons for the failure to obtain an accurate preoperative diagnosis of this disease.

The ultimate diagnosis typically hinges on a histopathological analysis of specimens obtained postoperatively. A review of the literature revealed that surgical resection was the most common option. Surgical removal will improve the symptoms of cyst compression and reduce the risk of BC transforming into a malignant tumor. The findings from the current literature review indicate that asymptomatic patients harboring small masses require careful monitoring. Conversely, for symptomatic patients, particularly those who are young as exemplified in this case report, surgical resection is advisable. In the case presented, the patient's respiratory distress was attributed to the growing mass exerting pressure on the diaphragmatic muscle. In addition to routine laparoscopic resection, Lee et al. proposed endoscopic mucosal resection (EMR) for the treatment of gastric BC. They proposed that when a lesion is suspected to be a solid tumor on the basis of EUS and CT investigations and if there is a positive cushion sign, the differential diagnosis of a developmental cyst should be considered, and EMR could be used for curative treatment. Regardless of the operation method, care should be taken to avoid intraoperative cyst rupture and postoperative infection complications. Due to the large size of the cyst in this case, open surgery was chosen to obtain a sufficient surgical field of view and ensure complete resection.

Although gastric BCs are a very rare disease, when comparing our case with those reported in PubMed, it can be seen that there are no specific clinical manifestations or laboratory indicators associated with BC. Elevated tumor markers have been reported in some cases; however, the sample size was insufficient to support an association. Early detection of suspected lesions is a favorable factor affecting patient survival. In addition, CT, MRI, and EUS are popular methods for detecting gastric BCs. Surgical removal is the most common way to relieve symptoms; however, the recommendation of surgical intervention for asymptomatic patients remains controversial. Through our diagnosis and treatment and the postoperative follow-up of this patient, we would like to show that surgical resection is recommended for young patients with large cysts and clinical symptoms to eliminate symptoms and the uncertainty of transformation of gastro BCs into malignant tumors.

CONCLUSION

Although gastric BCs are a very rare disease, when comparing our case with those reported in PubMed, it can be seen that there are no specific clinical manifestations or laboratory indicators associated with BC. Elevated tumor markers have been reported in some cases; however, the sample size was insufficient to support an association. Early detection of suspected lesions is a favorable factor affecting patient survival. In addition, CT, MRI, and EUS are popular methods for detecting gastric BCs. Surgical removal is the most common way to relieve symptoms; however, the recommendation of surgical intervention for asymptomatic patients remains controversial. Through our diagnosis and treatment and the postoperative follow-up of this patient, we would like to show that surgical resection is recommended for young patients with large cysts and clinical symptoms to eliminate symptoms and the uncertainty of transformation of gastro BCs into malignant tumors.

FOOTNOTES

**Author contributions:** Qu JJ was responsible for the overall project progress, paper revision and submission; Lu XR and Jiao XG contributed to manuscript writing and editing and data collection; Sun QH and Zhu QS contributed to the data analysis; Li BW and Zhu GX contributed to the conceptualization and supervision. All the authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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