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ABOUT COVER

Editorial Board Member of World Journal of Clinical Cases, Dr. Mukul Vij is Senior Consultant Pathologist and Lab Director at Dr Rela Institute and Medical Center in Chennai, India (since 2018). Having received his MBBS degree from King George Medical College in 2004, Dr. Vij undertook postgraduate training at Sanjay Gandhi Postgraduate Institute of Medical Sciences, receiving his Master’s degree in Pathology in 2008 and his PDCC certificate in Renal Pathology in 2009. After 2 years as senior resident, he became Assistant Professor in the Department of Pathology at Christian Medical College, Vellore (2011), moving on to Global Health City as Consultant Pathologist and then Head of the Pathology Department (2013). (L-Editor: Filipodia)

AIMS AND SCOPE

The primary aim of World Journal of Clinical Cases (WJCC, World J Clin Cases) is to provide scholars and readers from various fields of clinical medicine with a platform to publish high-quality clinical research articles and communicate their research findings online.

WJCC mainly publishes articles reporting research results and findings obtained in the field of clinical medicine and covering a wide range of topics, including case control studies, retrospective cohort studies, retrospective studies, clinical trials studies, observational studies, prospective studies, randomized controlled trials, randomized clinical trials, systematic reviews, meta-analysis, and case reports.

INDEXING/ABSTRACTING

The WJCC is now indexed in Science Citation Index Expanded (also known as SciSearch®), Journal Citation Reports/Science Edition, PubMed, and PubMed Central. The 2020 Edition of Journal Citation Reports® cites the 2019 impact factor (IF) for WJCC as 1.013; IF without journal self cites: 0.991; Ranking: 120 among 165 journals in medicine, general and internal; and Quartile category: Q3.

RESPONSIBLE EDITORS FOR THIS ISSUE

Production Editor: Jia-Hui Li; Production Department Director: Yu-Jie Ma; Editorial Office Director: Jin-Lei Wang.
Cholecystoduodenal fistula presenting with upper gastrointestinal bleeding: A case report

Jin Myung Park, Chang Don Kang, Ji Hyun Kim, Sang Hoon Lee, Seung-Joo Nam, Sung Chul Park, Sung Joon Lee, Seungkoo Lee

ORCID number: Jin Myung Park 0000-0002-8798-0587; Chang Don Kang 0000-0001-9748-968X; Ji Hyun Kim 0000-0092-9311-4001; Sang Hoon Lee 0000-0001-6468-0250; Seung-Joo Nam 0000-0002-0349-0901; Sung Chul Park 0000-0003-3215-6838; Sung Joon Lee 0000-0002-6451-0400; Seungkoo Lee 0000-0003-1317-4133.

Author contributions: Park JM was the patient’s doctor; Park JM and Kim JH performed endoscopy; Park JM and Kang CD reviewed the literature and contributed to manuscript drafting; Lee SH, Nam SJ, Park SC, and Lee SJ reviewed images and contributed to manuscript drafting; Lee SK performed histological analysis.

Inform consent statement: Informed written consent was obtained from the patient for publication of this report and any accompanying images.

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Abstract

BACKGROUND
Cholecystoduodenal fistula is a rare complication of cholelithiasis. Symptoms are usually non-specific and often indistinguishable from those of etiologic diseases, but it rarely presents as severe gastrointestinal bleeding. Bleeding associated with cholecystoduodenal fistula usually requires surgery because significant bleeding from the cystic artery is unlikely to be resolved by conservative management or endoscopic hemostasis.

CASE SUMMARY
We report a case of cholecystoduodenal fistula that presented with hematemesis which was diagnosed by endoscopy and computed tomography. Endoscopic hemostasis could not be achieved, but surgical treatment was successful. Additionally, we have presented a literature review.

CONCLUSION
Cholecystoduodenal fistula should be considered as differential diagnosis when a patient with history of gallstone disease presents with gastrointestinal bleeding.
Key Words: Biliary fistula; Hematemesis; Cholecystitis; Gallstones; Cholecystectomy; Case report

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Core Tip: Cholecystoenteric fistula, an abnormal communication from gallbladder to the gastrointestinal tract, is a rare complication of cholelithiasis. It is a type of internal biliary fistula that occurs secondary to cholelithiasis in more than 90% of cases. The clinical presentation of cholecystoenteric fistula is variable, and a preoperative diagnosis is achieved rarely, while gastrointestinal bleeding as its initial presentation is also rare. Here, we report a case of cholecystoduodenal fistula that presented with hypovolemic shock due to massive upper gastrointestinal bleeding.

INTRODUCTION

Cholecystoenteric fistula, an abnormal communication between gallbladder and the gastrointestinal tract, is a rare complication of cholelithiasis. It is a type of internal biliary fistula that occurs as complication of cholelithiasis in more than 90% of cases[1]. The cholecystoenteric fistula presents in variable symptoms, and an accurate diagnosis prior to surgery is achieved rarely[2]. It also rarely presents as upper gastrointestinal bleeding. Here, we report a case of cholecystoduodenal fistula that presented with hypovolemic shock due to massive upper gastrointestinal bleeding.

CASE PRESENTATION

Chief complaints
An 88-year-old male visited our emergency room complaining of right upper quadrant abdominal pain, and nausea.

History of present illness
The pain started 3 d ago, which was continuous cramping pain aggravated by meal, and severity of pain had increased from numeric rating scale of 3 to 8. The patient denied fevers, diarrhea or jaundice. Upon visit to the emergency room his blood pressure and heart rate were normal, but body temperature was elevated to 38 ºC.

History of past illness
His past medical record showed that he was diagnosed with hypertension, diabetes, heart failure, chronic kidney disease, previous cerebrovascular accident, and was currently taking aspirin. Also, computed tomography of abdomen taken 2 years ago showed that he had multiple stones in gall bladder without wall thickening, and he had no history of recurrent abdominal pain.

Personal and family history
He was an ex-smoker who had quit smoking 20 years ago, and no notable family history was found.

Physical examination
Physical examination revealed tenderness at right upper quadrant and positive Murphy sign.
Laboratory examinations
Initial laboratory findings were as follows; white blood cells 6200/mm$^3$, hemoglobin 134 g/L, aspartate aminotransferase 213 IU/L, alanine aminotransferase 164 IU/L, and C-reactive protein 14.3 mg/L.

Imaging examinations
Based on past medical record and current findings, abdominal computed tomography was done which revealed a gallstone and asymmetric gallbladder wall thickening, suggestive of chronic cholecystitis (Figure 1). Once he returned to the emergency department, he suddenly complained of hematemesis and developed hypovolemic shock (blood pressure 82/50 mmHg, heart rate 100/min). Emergent esophagogastroduodenoscopy was done, and bleeding was suspected at the duodenal bulb. However, it was difficult to make a definite diagnosis due to poor visibility. Endoscopy was performed the following day, after his condition had stabilized, and revealed an opening at the anterior wall of the duodenal bulb filled with blood clot suggestive of bleeding from cholecystoduodenal fistula (Figure 2).

FINAL DIAGNOSIS
Final diagnosis was cholecystitis with cholecystoduodenal fistula.

TREATMENT
Once the diagnosis was made he underwent open cholecystectomy and fistula closure. Operative findings and pathologic examination confirmed chronic cholecystitis with cholecystoduodenal fistula (Figure 3).

OUTCOME AND FOLLOW-UP
After surgery, his aspartate aminotransferase and alanine aminotransferase had improved to 16 IU/L and 75 IU/L respectively. His postoperative course was uneventful with the exception of wound dehiscence, which was improved by simple dressing and suture placement. He was discharged 16 d after the operation and was followed uneventfully for 18 mo.

DISCUSSION
Most internal biliary fistulas develop spontaneously, while majority of external fistulas develop as an iatrogenic event following surgery or percutaneous interventional procedures. About 91%-94% of spontaneous internal biliary fistulas are caused by stone in the biliary tract$^1$, followed by peptic ulcer disease as the second most common cause. Tumors, biliary abscesses, and echinococcus cysts have also been reported as other causes of internal biliary fistula$^3$. Cholecystoenteric fistulas are rare complications of gallstone disease with an autopsy reported incidence of 0.1%-0.5% and an incidence of 1.2%-5% among cholecystectomy cases$^4$. The condition occurs predominantly in women around the age of 60 years$^4$$^5$. The most common type of cholecystoenteric fistula is the cholecystoduodenal type, followed by cholecystocolonic and cholecystogastric fistula$^1$.

The pathogenesis of cholecystoduodenal fistula is unclear, but cholecystoenteric fistula occurring as late complications of gallstone disease is also known as Mirizzi syndrome type V$^6$. Pathophysiology for such complication is explained by mechanical pressure of gallstone that causes erosion of gallbladder and common bile duct wall that eventually results in formation of cholecystobiliary fistula$^7$$^8$. Recurrent episodes of gallbladder inflammation can also create fistula tract with other sites such as cholecystoduodenal, cholecystogastric, and cholecystocolonic fistulas$^9$$^{10}$.

In general, there are no specific clinical symptoms or signs suggestive of internal biliary fistula. Its symptoms are often indistinguishable from those of etiologic diseases, including abdominal pain, cholangitis with fever and/or jaundice, gallstone ileus, nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea, as well as acute or chronic/recurrent
Cholecystoduodenal fistula rarely causes gastrointestinal bleeding. Invasion of the cystic artery by a duodenal ulcer may cause massive bleeding, and a gallstone can cause erosion of the same artery. Reports on cholecystoduodenal fistula as a cause of severe upper gastrointestinal bleeding are rare. A thorough search of the medical literature revealed only 11 case reports published in English (Table 1). Among these reported cases, men were slightly more affected than women and two thirds were older than 60 years. Gallstone was the most common cause, and peptic ulcer was the etiology in only two cases. Endoscopic findings were variable and ranged from ulcer, fistulous opening, and bleeding of unknown origin. A subepithelial lesion was suspected in two cases. Endoscopic hemostasis was attempted in four cases, but...
surgery was finally required in all cases\cite{3,4,11,17}. All 13 patients that underwent surgery had good outcomes. Conservative treatment was administered to two patients and one patient expired. At autopsy, bleeding was determined to be from the cystic artery by cholecystoduodenal fistula\cite{18}.

As cholecystoduodenal fistula is a rare cause of massive gastrointestinal bleeding, clinicians should be aware of some signs that may help in differential diagnosis. Thorough history taking is always essential as history of gallstone disease may help in considering cholecystoduodenal fistula as differential diagnosis. It has been suggested by many authors that pneumobilia, a small atrophic gallbladder adherent to the neighboring organs, and a history of jaundice may be indicators for presence of a cholecystoenteric fistula\cite{3,4,17}. Nonvisualization of the gallbladder, despite absent history of cholecystectomy, or the presence of a thick-walled shrunken gallbladder adherent to the neighboring organs, have been reported as a suggestive finding of internal biliary fistula, especially the cholecystoenteric type.

Once the diagnosis is made, surgical treatment is the most effective method of treatment. Although many fistulas are treated with laparoscopic method due to increased skill of the surgeons and advanced techniques, open operation is preferred when there is distortion of anatomy and severe inflammation\cite{19}. The patient in this case report received open operation due to severe inflammation. Angioembolization is another treatment to consider at available centers for identification and possible blockage of active bleeding from fistula that could not be controlled by endoscopic hemostasis. However, most fistulas are difficult to close up if recurrent cholecystitis is not controlled\cite{11}, and surgical management is usually required.

**CONCLUSION**

In summary, gastrointestinal bleeding caused by cholecystoduodenal fistula usually requires surgery because significant bleeding from the cystic artery is unlikely to be resolved by conservative management or endoscopic hemostasis\cite{3}. Reported outcomes after surgery are excellent. A high index of suspicion is necessary, and early diagnosis of cholecystoduodenal fistula is essential for successful treatment.
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