A rare case of spontaneous hepaticoduodenal fistula and management of biliary obstruction in metastatic cholangiocarcinoma

A 60-year-old woman with a history of breast cancer presented with jaundice, epigastric pain, and fever for 1 week. Laboratory results revealed a total bilirubin of 14.9 mg/dL and alkaline phosphatase of 365 U/L. Abdominal computed tomography revealed a 6.1×2.8-cm hilar liver mass with intrahepatic biliary dilatation (▶Fig.1; ▶Video1); subsequent abdominal magnetic resonance imaging demonstrated an infiltrative soft tissue mass encasing the common hepatic and central intrahepatic ducts, suggestive of intrahepatic cholangiocarcinoma (▶Fig.2).

Endoscopic ultrasound (EUS) demonstrated a fistulous tract, which was draining into the duodenal bulb (▶Video1). EUS-guided fine needle aspiration (FNA) of the liver mass was performed. During endoscopic retrograde cholangiopancreatography (ERCP), despite cannulation of the major papilla, the guidewire could not be advanced to the proximal common hepatic duct; a cholangiogram revealed complete obstruction of the proximal common bile duct (▶Fig.3). Contrast injection through the fistulous tract in the duodenal bulb confirmed a hepaticoduodenal fistula with marked intrahepatic duct dilatation. The fistula tract was dilated and two plastic biliary stents were placed with their proximal ends in the right and left main hepatic ducts and good flow resulted (▶Fig.4 and ▶Fig.5a).

After 2 weeks, the patient’s liver enzymes had notably improved and the plastic stents were exchanged for a covered metal stent (▶Fig.5b and ▶Fig.6). Pathology from the EUS-FNA demonstrated adenocarcinoma morphologically favoring a cholangiocarcinoma, and
the patient was referred to medical oncology.

Hepaticoduodenal fistulas are generally iatrogenic complications, occurring after transcatheter arterial chemoembolization or surgery complicated by bile duct injury [1, 2]. There are very few reports of biliary compression with stent placement utilizing identified hepaticoduodenal fistulas [3, 4]. EUS-guided cholecodochoduodenostomy is an emerging technique for biliary decompression when routine ERCP techniques are unsuccessful [5]. To our knowledge and from a review of the literature, this is the first reported case of a spontaneous hepaticoduodenal fistula that was utilized to facilitate palliative and therapeutic biliary decompression.

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Competing interests

None

The authors

Andrew J. Kruger1, Somashekar G. Krishna2
1 Department of Internal Medicine, The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center, Columbus, Ohio, USA
2 Divisions of Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition, The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center, Columbus, Ohio, USA

Corresponding author

Somashekar G. Krishna, MD, MPH
395 W 12th Ave, 2nd Floor, Columbus, OH 43210, USA
Fax: +1-614-293-8518
somashekar.krishna@osumc.edu

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