Biliary pneumatosis: a new finding in a patient with cholangitis

A 72-year-old man with a previous history of renal transplantation for autosomal dominant polycystic kidney disease and secondary sclerosing cholangitis caused by recurrent bile duct injury with hepatolithiasis was admitted with a new episode of cholangitis, with a gallstone, but no signs of septic shock. Additionally, he had undergone cholecystectomy and Roux-en-Y hepaticojejunostomy 2 years previously.

During the current hospital admission, percutaneous transhepatic cholangiography showed multiple strictures along the right and left intrahepatic ducts, with a gallstone in the left duct. Percutaneous radiological management failed because of an impassable stenosis. Thereafter, endoscopic duodenjejunoscopy with a lumen-apposing metal stent (LAMS; Hot-AXIOS; Boston Scientific Co., Marlborough, Massachusetts, USA) was performed to facilitate access to the afferent limb and complete an evaluation of the left intrahepatic duct. A gastroscope was introduced into the hepaticojejunostomy through the LAMS (Video 1). A calculus within segment III of the liver was observed and fragmented using electrohydraulic lithotripsy (Fig. 1 and Fig. 2a). Additionally, the endoscopy revealed submucosal blebs in the left intrahepatic bile duct (Fig. 2b, c; Video 1), resulting in benign bile duct strictures. Some of the blebs were punctured with a sclerotherapy needle to confirm the presence of gas in the hepatic duct walls (Fig. 2d). The appearance of the gas-filled blebs was consistent with biliary pneumatosis. The patient was discharged home on day 3 after his endoscopy.

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Competing interests

Dr. Aparicio is a consultant for Boston Scientific. The remaining authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.
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Fig. 2: Endoscopic views showing: a hepatolithiasis fragmentation using electrohydraulic lithotripsy; b the hepatic duct bifurcation with a gas-filled bleb; c another submucosal bleb within the left intrahepatic duct; d puncture of a bleb with a sclerotherapy needle releasing gas.