A surprising case of a biliary tumor-like lesion

A 74-year-old man referred to our institute complained of asthenia and jaundice associated with altered laboratory liver tests. The patient's history included cardiopathy, dyslipidemia, arterial hypertension, and partial gastrectomy with Billroth II reconstruction due to a peptic ulcer. Abdominal ultrasound showed dilation of intrahepatic bile ducts associated with hepatic hilar tissue, strongly suspected for hilar tumor (Klatskin type IV according to Bismuth–Corlette classification) [1–3] on computed tomography (CT) scan (Fig. 1), associated with low grade intra-abdominal fluid. Neoplastic markers (carbohydrate antigen 19-9, carcinoembryonic antigen, and alpha-fetoprotein) were negative. Percutaneous transhepatic-cholangiography with brushing and biliary internal-external 10-Fr drainage placement was considered the best option. Cytology examination was inconclusive.

A post-procedural intrahepatic bleed from a pseudo-aneurym of a branch of the hepatic artery caused an intrahepatic hematoma, solved by arterial embolization and percutaneous drainage (Fig. 2). Later we performed an ante-grade cholangioscopy through the percutaneous access. Cholangioscopy showed a papillary, friable, and angiogenic tissue at the hilar site, which was sampled. Surprisingly, histologic examination showed only inflammatory tissue. A second percutaneous cholangioscopy was performed in the radiologic theater (Fig. 3) and an unexpected image appeared: a hard, brownish, oblong 17-mm formation was embedded in the suspected papillary tissue, so it was gently extracted using a forceps for foreign bodies (Fig. 4, Video 1). On macroscopic evaluation it appeared as a fishbone; the histology showed an animal origin (vimentin dye negative) and mineral consistency comparable to a chicken bone (Fig. 5). The histology on the hilar tissue identified inflammatory tissue without any sign of dysplasia/neoplasia, compatible with a foreign body reaction. The
patient fully recovered after removal of biliary drainage, and the cholangiography showed a more regular hilar biliary tree with normal bile and contrast outflow. After 6 months of follow-up the patient did not complain about any other symptom and imaging did not show signs of malignancy.

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Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

The authors

Giacomo Emanuele Maria Rizzo1,2,3, Luigi Maruzzelli4, Rosa Liotta4, Roberto Miraglia4, Salvatore Gruttadauria6,7, Mario Traina1, Ilaria Tarantino1,2

1 Endoscopy Service, Department of Diagnostic and Therapeutic Services, IRCCS-ISMETT, Palermo, Italy

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Corresponding author

Ilaria Tarantino, MD
Endoscopy Service, Department of Diagnostic and Therapeutic Services, IRCCS-ISMETT Palermo, Via Ernesto Tricomi 5, 90127 Palermo, Italy
itarantino@ismett.edu

Fig. 5 a Fishbone-shaped foreign body after extraction. b Hematoxylin staining at 40 × magnification showing an animal origin and a mineral consistency. c 80 × magnification showing granular tissue adhered to the foreign body.

Video 1 Video showing how percutaneous cholangioscopy with biopsy is fundamental in differential diagnosis of hilar biliary tumors. A foreign body was identified and removed with forceps. The tissue covering the foreign body was sampled and the histology examination showed a mineral consistency comparable to a chicken bone.