Resolution of a refractory severe biliary stricture using a diathermic sheath

Endoscopic treatment of postoperative bile duct strictures (BDSs) is safe and effective [1]. However, when the BDS is severe and only the guide wire can be passed through it, stent placement is not possible. We describe a case of refractory, severe postoperative hilar BDS that was successfully treated using a diathermic sheath.

A 47-year-old man was admitted to our department with recurrent cholangitis. He had previously undergone surgical treatment for gallbladder cancer in 2009, which was followed by regular placement of 7-Fr tube stents for BDS, until the stent was removed at the request of the patient, despite the fact that endoscopic retrograde cholangiopancreatography (ERCP) still revealed a BDS. As a result, 17 months later he developed cholangitis. An ERCP following admission revealed severe hilar BDSs (Fig. 1 a). Although a 0.035-inch guide wire was successfully advanced across the left hepatic BDS (Fig. 1 b), it was not possible to pass a tapered catheter, Soehendra biliary dilation catheter, or stent retriever (Wilson-Cook, Winston-Salem, North Carolina, USA; Video 1). It was therefore decided to incise the BDS using a 6-Fr diathermic sheath (Cysto-Gastro-Set; Endo-Flex, Voerde, Germany; Fig. 2), which was advanced over the guide wire to the level of the left hepatic BDS (Fig. 3 a; Video 1). An incision was made in the BDS using an electrosurgical generator (Fig. 3 b, Video 1) and a 5-Fr nasobiliary tube was placed. The patient experienced no serious complications. An ERCP 5 days later revealed resolution of the left hepatic BDS (Fig. 4 a), and 7-Fr plastic stents were successfully placed (Fig. 4 b).

Diathermic sheaths have been used previously to enlarge the channel between the stomach or duodenum and a pancreatic pseudocyst, the pancreatic duct or the gallbladder [2–5]. To our knowledge, this is the first report of a refractory, severe postoperative BDS successfully treated using a diathermic sheath. Although further study is required, this approach has great potential for selected patients with refractory BDS.

Competing interests: None
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DOI http://dx.doi.org/10.1055/s-0031-1291675
Endoscopy 2012; 44: E119–E120
© Georg Thieme Verlag KG
Stuttgart · New York
ISSN 0013-726X

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Fig. 3 Radiographic images showing: a the diathermic sheath being advanced over the guide wire to the level of the bile duct stricture (inset: endoscopic view of the diathermic sheath being advanced over the guide wire into the bile duct); b the diathermic sheath after its passage through the stricture in the left hepatic bile duct.

Fig. 4 Radiographic images taken during an endoscopic retrograde cholangiopancreatography (ERCP) performed 5 days after treatment showing: a resolution of the left hepatic bile duct stricture; b the multiple 7-Fr plastic stents that were successfully placed.