

Acute esophageal necrosis: possible association with terlipressin

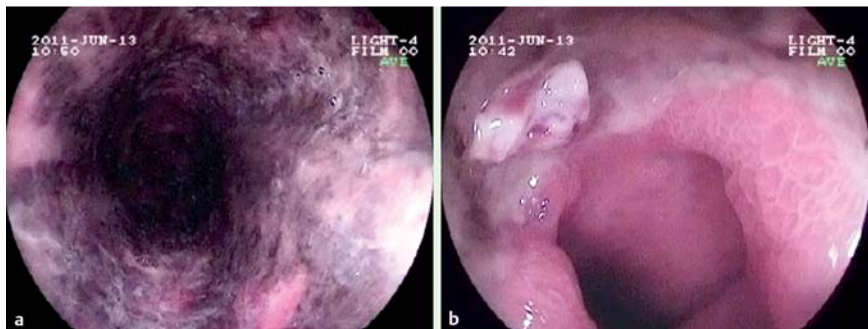


Fig. 1 Endoscopic views in a 75-year-old man with hematemesis and melena showing: **a** a black mucosa consistent with acute esophageal necrosis; **b** an exposed vessel in an ulcer at the cardia.

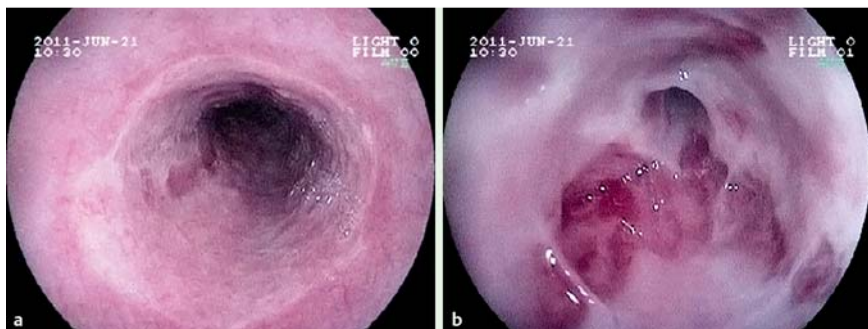


Fig. 2 Views during a second endoscopy performed after 8 days showing: **a** a clear margin between the intact proximal esophagus and the damaged middle third of the esophagus; **b** a stricture of the cardia.

A 75-year-old man was admitted to our department with abdominal pain, hematemesis, and melena. His significant medical history included erosive gastritis, alcohol-related chronic liver disease, and chronic pancreatitis. He was not receiving any medication. His blood pressure was low (80/50 mmHg); results of laboratory testing showed macrocytic anemia and liver dysfunction (hemoglobin 11.8 g/dL, mean cell volume [MCV] 106.4 fL, international normalized ratio [INR] 1.53). After a second episode of hematemesis, his hemoglobin dropped to 8.9 g/dL and he was treated by infusion of a colloidal solution, two units of packed red blood cells, a proton pump inhibitor, and terlipressin (2 mg every 4 hours).

Endoscopy showed a black mucosa (► Fig. 1a) that started from the upper esophagus and ended abruptly at the cardia. At that level, we identified an ulcer ex-

tending circumferentially in which there was a large exposed vessel (► Fig. 1b), which was treated by application of a Hemoclip. The stomach and duodenum were intact. Brushings were negative for cytomegalovirus. Broad-spectrum antibiotics, antifibrinolytic drugs, and parenteral nutrition were commenced; terlipressin was stopped.

Endoscopy at day 8 showed a clear margin between the intact proximal esophagus and its lower portion (► Fig. 2a). The luminal circumference decreased cranio-caudally, ending in a stricture at the cardia (► Fig. 2b). At day 16, the distal esophagus appeared stenotic but was passable and enteral nutrition was resumed. The patient was discharged 25 days after admission. A month later, endoscopy revealed almost complete restoration of the mucosa. Notably, at the cardia we observed a Schatzki ring (► Fig. 3). A further

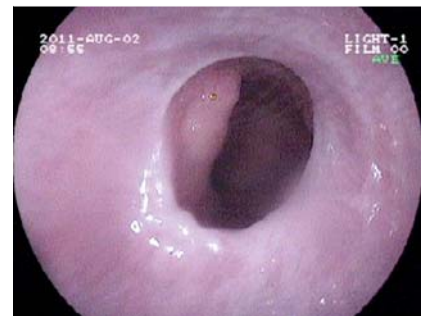


Fig. 3 View of the lower esophagus during an endoscopy performed a month after discharge showing a Schatzki ring.

endoscopy 8 months later showed no abnormal esophageal findings.

Acute esophageal necrosis is characterized by a circumferential mucosal blackening involving the distal esophagus and occasionally extending upstream that stops abruptly at the gastroesophageal junction [1]. Ulceration of the cardia, as in this case, is uncommon; however, similar cases have been reported [2].

Ischemia, impaired mucosal defenses, and chemical insult seem to contribute to its pathogenesis [3]. The distal esophagus has been shown to be less vascularized in angiographic studies [2,3], arguably making it susceptible to local hypoperfusion caused by low splanchnic blood flow. In the case described, such a state could have resulted from hemorrhage and hypotension.

Furthermore, because of the signs of liver dysfunction and the history of alcohol abuse, which suggested variceal bleeding, the patient received terlipressin, a splanchnic vasoconstrictor that may have reduced microcirculatory perfusion, further contributing to the local ischemia [4]. Although cutaneous necrosis following terlipressin treatment has been reported [5], this is the first reported case of a possible association with acute esophageal necrosis.

Endoscopy_UCTN_Code_CCL_1AB_2AC_3AH

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