The large-balloon occupation technique: a new technique for removing multiple biliary stones from a large-diameter bile duct

Multiple stones, a periampullary diverticulum, and advanced patient age are factors that contribute to difficulty in stone removal [1]. We were able to completely remove the bile duct stones in a 93-year-old woman with a periampullary diverticulum, multiple stones (about 100), and common bile duct of 35 mm in diameter using the large-balloon occupation technique (LBOT).

The patient visited our hospital because of abdominal pain, and gallstone pancreatitis was diagnosed. Computed tomography (CT) scanning showed about 100 stones in the bile duct (▶ Fig.1) and an impacted stone in the papilla. Emergency endoscopic biliary drainage was therefore performed.

After the patient’s pancreatitis had improved, endoscopic lithotripsy was performed. Endoscopic retrograde cholangiography (ERC) showed a markedly dilated bile duct (35 mm) and many filling defects with diameters of 3–12 mm (▶ Fig.2). At the first session of endoscopic lithotripsy, we were unable to
grasp the stones because of the considerable space between the stones and bile duct wall. Suctioning of bile and contrast media was used to eliminate this space as much as possible and make it easier to grasp the stones. However, after about 40 stones had been removed, the space between the stones and the bile duct wall gradually increased, again making it difficult to grasp the stones. A second treatment session was performed 3 days later using the LBOT (▶ Video 1). This technique allows the stones to be grasped because a large balloon is used to occupy the space between the stones and the bile duct wall (▶ Fig. 3). Stone removal was performed twice using this technique. Repeat ERC and cholangioscopy confirmed that there were no residual stones. Complete stone removal required a total of three procedures (210 minutes). There were no complications.

In patients with a large-diameter bile duct, the relative size of any stones is smaller than that in patients with a small-diameter bile duct, even if the actual stone diameter is the same. This is one of the factors that causes difficulty in stone removal. The LBOT seems to be useful in such patients.

Competing interests
None

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DOI https://doi.org/10.1055/s-0043-106733
Endoscopy 2017; 49: E155–E156
© Georg Thieme Verlag KG
Stuttgart · New York
ISSN 0013-726X