Intrabiliary argon plasma coagulation hemostasis by direct cholangioscopy for a tricky post-ERCP bleeding

An 80-year-old man was admitted to the emergency department with fever, jaundice, and abdominal pain due to common bile duct (CBD) lithiasis. His past medical history revealed chronic renal failure and atrial fibrillation, which was treated with warfarin. Therapy with antibiotics and phytonadione was promptly started, and international normalized ratio values returned to normal.

Cholangiography showed the CBD dilated up to 18 mm and multiple large stones. Sphincterotomy was performed, followed by papillary pneumatic dilation up to 15 mm and stone extraction, with no residual filling defect at cholangiography.
The following day, the patient presented signs of hypovolemic shock (hemoglobin 6 g/dL) and melena. Prompt transfusion was organized and an urgent ERCP showed oozing bleeding in the papillary region (►Fig. 1). Diluted epinephrine was injected, but because of persistent active bleeding, a fully covered metal stent, 40 × 10 mm, was placed. Fibrin glue (Tissucol; Baxter AG, Vienna, Austria) was injected into the papillary area, resulting in complete hemostasis (►Fig. 2).

After 3 days, another episode of melena and anemia occurred. A further ERCP was performed, and showed a distally migrated biliary stent and visible oozing bleeding coming from the inside the CBD (►Fig. 3).

Direct cholangioscopy was performed using a slim gastroscope (EG530NP, 8.5 mm thin; Fujinon, Tokyo, Japan), under carbon dioxide insufflation, and showed an active bleeding vessel in the distal tract of the CBD. Argon plasma coagulation was successfully applied (setting Precise 15–20 W; Erbe, Tübingen, Germany) under direct visualization (►Fig. 4, ►Video1), with no related adverse events.

The patient’s general condition and laboratory tests improved until discharge. There were no clinical signs of bleeding at 6-month follow-up.

This case describes the possible challenges in treating post-ERCP biliary bleeding and a new promising simple approach that should be considered as a part of the endoscopist’s armamentarium. To our knowledge this is the first described case of hemostatic APC application in CBD under direct visualization [1–3].

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Competing interests
Andrea Anderloni is a consultant for Boston Scientific.

The authors
Andrea Anderloni1, Francesco Auriemma1, Alessandro Fugazza1, Roberta Maselli1, Alessandro Repici1,2
1 Digestive Endoscopy Unit, Division of Gastroenterology, Humanitas Research Hospital, Rozzano, Milan, Italy
2 Humanitas University, Rozzano, Milan, Italy

Corresponding author
Andrea Anderloni, MD, PhD
Digestive Endoscopy Unit, Division of Gastroenterology, Humanitas Research Hospital, Via Manzoni 56, 20089 Rozzano (Milano), Italy
Fax: +39-02-82242292
andrea.anderloni@humanitas.it

Video 1 Argon plasma coagulation of active bleeding vessel in the distal tract of the common bile duct under direct visualization during cholangioscopy.
References

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Bibliography

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