“CLIP-STONE” FILIATION WITHIN THE BILIARY TRACT

B. MANSVELT, J. HARB, B. FARKAS, M. MOUROU and C. HUGUET

Departments of Surgery and Radiology, Princess Grace Hospital, Monaco, Principality of Monaco

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Although rare, the accidental migration of foreign bodies into the biliary tract is well known. Parasites (ascaris, fasciola hepatica2, clonorchis sinensis3 and non absorbable suture material used in a previous biliary tract procedure4) are the most common causes of bile duct obstruction. Metallic clips may also migrate from the cystic duct into the common bile duct and form the nidus for a stone, as we report here.

Case: A 88 year-old man was admitted for cholangitis four years after surgical cholecystectomy performed in another institution. Common bile duct obstruction was diagnosed with abdominal pain, jaundice, mild fever and cholestasis (bilirubin: Normal × 6, alkaline phosphatase: Normal × 2.5, Amylase: Normal × 20). Plain film of the abdomen revealed several clips in the right upper quadrant with one of them in front of L2 vertebra and which proved to be mobile on a control X-ray. Abdominal ultrasound demonstrated mild pancreatitis while the CT scan performed two days later, revealed a dilated common bile duct with metallic material in its lumen, attributable to a clip (Figure 1). Intravenous cholangiography confirmed the presence of a stone surrounding a metal clip at the lower end of the bile duct (Figure 2). In the absence of an experienced endoscopist, surgery was undertaken and the stone with the metal nidus could be easily extracted through the supra-duodenal bile duct. Four other clips surrounded with inflammatory granulomas were found close to the remnant cystic duct, suggesting they would have been eliminated in the same way as the first one. Complete excision of the cystic duct with the remaining clip and closure of the common duct with a continuous suture of absorbable material completed the procedure. The post operatory course was uneventful.

Address correspondence to: Professor Claude Huguet, M D, Department of Surgery, Princess Grace Hospital, Monaco.
Homans was the first, in 1897, to describe the formation of a common duct stone around a silk suture. In 1971 Ban et al. reviewed 63 published cases of foreign bodies divided in three etiologic groups: (1) post operative, (2) penetrating trauma injury, and (3) alimentary material. The most frequent cause is non resorbable suture material followed exceptionally by a segment of a T tube or of a gauze swab. Metal clips have previously been reported by Walker, Brutvan, Von Wittenberg and Margolis. The clinical features are very suggestive with cholangitis and radiological evidence of intrabiliary metallic material. Following cholecystectomy, the delay of migration and stone formation varies from one to 13 years. When available, interventional endoscopy may be the treatment of choice, possibly associated with extracorporeal lithotripsy. In case of multiple clips,
surgery may be more suitable to avoid recurrent obstruction. Since laparoscopic cholecystectomy has become very popular today with routine application of metallic clips\textsuperscript{18–20}, other accidents will appear certainly in the future. The risk should be obviated by the use of resorbable clips which are already available for laparoscopic surgery.

References


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INVITED COMMENTARY

Foreign bodies in the common bile duct are relatively rare. The most common cause being residual objects from previous operations. Other causes are penetrating missile fragments or bullets and more rarely, ingested foreign bodies.

In our present era of the increased performance of laparoscopic cholecystectomies, we see a more common usage of silver clips for both cystic duct and cystic artery closure. The present report should alert us of the necessity to develop and use absorbable clips.

Prof. R. Orda
Assaf Harofeh Medical Center
Sackler Faculty of Medicine
Tel-Aviv University
Israel
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