Percutaneous Holmium Laser Fulguration of Calyceal Diverticula

Amjad Alwaal, Raed A. Azhar, and Sero Andonian

Division of Urology, McGill University Health Centre, Montreal, QC, Canada H3A 1A1

Correspondence should be addressed to Sero Andonian, sero.andonian@muhc.mcgill.ca

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1. Introduction

Calyceal diverticulum is a congenital thin-walled, urothelial-lined cavity that communicates with the collecting system through a narrow ostium. This narrow neck allows the diverticulum to be filled passively with urine. It is an uncommon finding that is found incidentally in 0.21–0.45% of individuals undergoing renal imaging [1, 2]. Stones complicate 9.5–50% of calyceal diverticula, resulting in pain and/or hematuria [1, 3].

Shockwave lithotripsy can produce symptomatic relief from diverticular stone. However, it is associated with a low stone-free rate of 21% [4]. Although retrograde ureteroscopic and laparoscopic approaches have been described, percutaneous management of calyceal diverticula represents the cornerstone in the management of calyceal diverticular stone disease and offers the highest stone-free rate of 90% [5–9]. Current percutaneous techniques for calyceal diverticular stones involve establishing a renal access, clearing the stone, and fulgurating the diverticular lining with a roller-ball electrode cautery using a hypotonic irrigation solution such as sterile water or glycine [10]. However, this may be associated with absorption of hypotonic fluids with its inherent electrolyte disturbances. Therefore, the aim of the present study was to apply holmium:yttrium-aluminum-garnet (Ho:YAG) or the holmium laser technology for fulguration of calyceal diverticula in 2 patients using normal saline.

2. Case Presentation

2.1. Patient 1. A 56-year-old woman presented with flank pain without significant past medical history (Table 1). IVP showed the presence of a 2 × 2.1 cm calyceal diverticulum in the anterior aspect of the left upper pole (Figure 1(a)). Urine culture grew Pseudomonas aeruginosa, which was treated with ciprofloxacin. A month prior, she had a failed attempt of percutaneous diverticulectomy by another urologist. She had a re-entry 20 F Malecot nephrostomy tube.

2.2. Patient 2. A 64-year-old woman presented with flank pain and frequent urinary tract infections (Table 1). Her past medical history was significant for hypothyroidism. A CT scan of the abdomen showed the presence of a mid-pole calyceal diverticulum on the anterior aspect containing 2 stones (1.8 × 1.1 cm and 1.4 × 1.4 cm) in a cavity of 2.4 × 1.4 cm. Urine culture grew Klebsiella, which was treated with ciprofloxacin.
2.3. Technique. For the first patient, an indwelling 16 F Foley catheter was inserted into the bladder and the patient was positioned into prone position. Access into the calyceal diverticulum was gained through the previous nephrostomy access. For the second patient, flexible cystoscopy was performed and a 5 F ureteral catheter was placed into the renal pelvis under fluoroscopic guidance. The ureteral catheter was secured to the 16 F Foley catheter and the patient was positioned into prone position. Using injection of mixture of contrast dye and indigo carmine, access into the
calyceal diverticulum was obtained with a diamond-tipped 18 G needle. This required 2 punctures. After placing guidewires, the tract was dilated using the X-Force N30 balloon dilator (Bard, Covington, GA). Both patients had only one percutaneous tract. A 30 F Amplatz sheath and an indirect nephroscope were used to visualize the stones. Stones were fragmented and aspirated with the Swiss LithoClast Ultra (Boston Scientific, Natick, MA). Stone-free status was confirmed by both fluoroscopy and direct visualization using a flexible nephroscope. For the first patient, the calyceal ostium was identified and dilated to 20 F using Amplatz dilators. For the second patient, the calyceal ostium was not identified. Once stone-free, a 365 µm holmium laser fiber (SlimLine 365 micron Blue Jacket Reusable Fiber; Lumenis Inc., Santa Clara, CA) stabilized with a 7 F ureteral catheter (Cook, Bloomington, IN) and used through the indirect nephroscope.

3. Discussion

Minimally invasive treatment options for calyceal diverticula include percutaneous surgery, ureteroscopy, and laparoscopic surgery. Most investigators agree that eradication of the calyceal diverticulum is essential for the prevention of stone recurrence in these patients. The percutaneous approach has a high stone-free rate of 90% [9]. Traditionally, this approach required dilatation of the ostium and fulguration of the mucosa. Recently, Kim et al. have demonstrated that dilatation of the tract is not necessary. Their technique involved the fulguration of the diverticulum using a roller-ball electrode without cannulating or dilating the infundibulum [10]. However, this is done using hypotonic irrigation solution thus the potential risk of postoperative serum electrolyte disturbances.

Holmium:yttrium-aluminum-garnet (Ho:YAG) or the holmium laser has a wavelength of 2100 nm, which is absorbed by water [11]. Furthermore, its depth of penetration is only 0.5 to 1 mm [12]. In addition, holmium laser provides the advantage of using normal saline as an irrigation solution. In a prospective study of holmium laser enucleation of the prostate, it was found that the procedure was not associated with dilutional hyponatremia, and it did not affect the sodium concentration postoperatively [13]. Therefore, it is safer to use holmium laser and it allows for a longer operative time. In this initial case report, we present for the first time percutaneous Holmium laser fulguration of calyceal diverticula in 2 patients using normal saline. In the present study, the postoperative serum sodium remained stable or increased (Table 1). Furthermore, the procedures were performed in an ambulatory setting since both patients were healthy with satisfactory post-operative chest X-rays and hematocrits (Table 1). Follow-up IVP indicated stone-free status at 24 months in the first patient and at 12 months in the second patient; both were symptom-free at 30 months. However, larger sample size is required to confirm these results.

A controversy exists whether underlying urinary metabolic abnormalities in patients with calyceal diverticular stones exist [14–16]. In the present study, both patients showed metabolic stone work-up abnormalities that were treated adequately (Table 1).
4. Conclusion

Holmium laser is a safe and effective alternative method of fulgurating calyceal diverticular mucosa after clearing calyceal stones percutaneously. A limitation of the study is that it is an initial report, and a longer followup with a larger patient population is needed.

Abbreviations

ASA: American Society of Anesthesiology
KUB: Kidney Ureter Bladder Film
IVP: Intravenous pyelogram

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interests.

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References
