Coccidioidal Placentalis With Normal Umbilical
Artery Velocimetry

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ABSTRACT

Background: Disseminated coccidiodomycosis during pregnancy can lead to both maternal and neo-
atal mortality. Placentitis is an uncommon sequelae and its effect on placental function remains
speculative. The present report describes our management of such a case and describes serial
umbilical artery velocimetry of an affected placenta.

Case: A pregnant woman with coccidioidal placentitis confirmed histologically was treated with
systemic and intrathecal amphotericin B starting at 28 weeks gestation. Serial umbilical artery
velocimetry revealed that all systolic/diastolic ratios remained normal, and a normal infant was
delivered at term.

Conclusion: Coccidioidal placentitis was successfully treated with amphotericin B; serial umbili-
cal artery velocimetry monitoring exhibited no abnormalities and, along with other reassuring fetal
parameters, allowed continuation of the pregnancy to term.

KEY WORDS
Coccidiomycosis, Doppler, S/D ratios, amphotericin, meningitis

Coccidiomycosis affects 1 in every 1,000 preg-
nancies in endemic areas of the southwestern
United States1; disseminated disease with meningi-
tis and placentitis is much less common, with fewer
than 60 cases having been reported. The use
of amphotericin B and modern neonatal care have sig-
nificantly reduced the previously high maternal and
neonatal mortality associated with this disease, but a
perinatal mortality of 4–14% remains for dissemi-
nated disease in pregnant patients.2,3 Placental ab-
normalities associated with coccidioidal placental
invasion have been postulated as the pathologic
mechanisms explaining the increased perinatal mor-
bidity and mortality. We hypothesized that these
lesions might lead to measurable placental resis-
tance values inasmuch as the characteristic coccidio-
idal changes (infarction, necrosis, and fibrin depo-
sition) are common to the spectrum of lesions and
lead to reduced placental parenchymal perfusion
and increased umbilical artery resistance.4 We re-
port umbilical artery velocimetry as an indicator of
placental resistance in a patient with coccidioidal
meningitis and histologically confirmed coccidio-
idal placentitis.

CASE REPORT
A 27-year-old Hispanic female, G2P0Ab1, pre-
sented at 24 weeks gestation with an upper respira-
tory illness. She lived in central New Mexico
though she had visited southern Arizona 6 weeks
previously. Over a period of 2 weeks, the patient
developed nausea, vomiting, headaches, blurred
vision, fever, and weight loss. She had developed
skin lesions on her upper lip and on her nose. A
Fig. 1. Skin biopsy revealing spherule engulfed by multinucleated giant cells.

Fig. 2. Umbilical artery S/D ratios in the 10th to 25th percentile range.⁴
biopsy confirmed *Coccidioides immitis* infection (Fig. 1). At 28 weeks, the coccidioidal complement fixation titer was found to be 1:8 in the cerebrospinal fluid and 1:64 in serum.

An ultrasound examination confirmed a 28-week male fetus, appropriate for gestational age. The umbilical artery systolic/diastolic (S/D) ratio determined at this time was in the 10th to 25th percentile at 2.5; ratios were subsequently determined at 3- to 7-day intervals (Fig. 2). Serial ultrasound examinations and nonstress tests likewise remained reassuring.

Treatment was initiated with systemic amphotericin B (to a maximum of 64 mg/day) in addition to intrathecal medication (0.3 mg on alternate days) until delivery at 38 weeks when the patient underwent spontaneous rupture of the fetal membranes. Oxytocin augmentation resulted in a normal spontaneous vaginal delivery. The infant weighed 3,130 g with APGAR scores of 9 and 10 at 1 and 5 minutes. The placenta appeared grossly normal except for three areas of infarction (confirmed microscopically), each smaller than 2 cm in diameter. Further microscopic examination revealed moderate amounts of intervillous fibrin deposition, numerous fungal spherules containing endospores and foreign body giant cells, and an acute inflammatory reaction (Figs. 3, 4).

The patient’s symptoms gradually resolved after the initiation of therapy, and the skin lesions diminished in size. Her total dose of amphotericin B at time of delivery had reached 4 g, and the regimen was changed to fluconazole, 400 mg daily, along with continuation of intracisternal amphotericin B, 0.5 mg weekly. The postpartum course was uneventful; she and the infant were discharged on the third day following delivery.

**DISCUSSION**

The use of Doppler velocimetry has been described in the evaluation of many conditions in human pregnancy. Diabetes mellitus, systemic lupus erythematosus, hypertensive disorders of pregnancy, and sickle cell disease have all illustrated the utility of uterine-umbilical artery velocimetry in conditions associated with placental vascular disease.\(^5^\)\(^-^\)\(^8^\) However, Doppler investigation of pla-
COCCIDIOIDAL PLACENTITIS

NICKISCH ET AL.

Fig. 4. Higher magnification of placenta with endospore-filled spherules.

coccioiditis secondary to a specific infectious agent has not been reported.

A component of the pathophysiologic process in coccidiomycosis infection is that the hyphal outer wall of the fungal arthrocomidia of C. immitis resists phagocytosis, possibly as a result of the deposition of fibrinous material that inhibits polymorphonuclear cell access to the infectious agent. The presence of placentitis with the concomitant fibrinous deposition and other pathologic features might lead to increased placental resistance and subsequent fetal compromise. Umbilical artery velocimetry serially throughout the third trimester, however, provided no evidence of functional placental compromise.

Despite the documentation of placental infection with the presence of multinucleated giant cells, fungal spherules and endospores, moderate intervillous fibrin deposition, and focal infarction with necrosis (Fig. 3), the umbilical artery measurements from 28 weeks to term showed no evidence of altered placental vascular resistance. The S/D ratio of the umbilical artery is plotted along the group of percentiles from Arabin’s normative data (Fig. 4). The lack of correlation between pathologic findings and umbilical artery velocimetric data suggests that the functional effect of the placentitis in this case did not contribute to increased placental resistance and subsequent fetal compromise. It is possible that even a significant infectious process might not be reflected in fetal compromise unless there is a significant reduction in the number of terminal arteries in the tertiary villi.

In summary, we report the birth of an appropriate-for-gestational-age infant at term without objective evidence of placental insufficiency despite disseminated maternal disease and significant coccidioidal placentitis. The lack of abnormal velocimetric measurements coupled with other reassuring fetal parameters may allow continued observation of preterm pregnancies affected by this and other infectious agents.

REFERENCES

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