

Aunque es conocida desde la antigüedad, la esquistosomiasis fue identificada por primera vez como causa de un parásito por Theodor Bilharz en el año 1852². La esquistosomiasis intestinal es producida principalmente por *S. mansoni*, aunque también por tres especies secundarias en importancia, como *S. japonicum*, *S. intercalatum* y *S. mekongi*. Cada especie presenta un área geográfica endémica específica, determinada por el área de extensión de una especie concreta de caracol, que es el huésped intermediario. *S. intercalatum* se encuentra circunscrito a África Occidental³.

El hombre es el principal huésped definitivo y se infecta mediante contacto directo entre la piel y el agua contaminada⁴. Las larvas transformadas migran a través de los vasos sanguíneos y linfáticos hasta alcanzar el hígado, donde se transforman en parásitos adultos, para posteriormente desplazarse hacia órganos específicos según la especie (las venas mesentéricas en el caso de *S. intercalatum*) donde permanecerán vivos entre 4 y 30 años⁵.

La mayoría de los pacientes infectados con estos parásitos están asintomáticos. La sintomatología aguda —dermatitis del nadador o la fiebre Katayama— es más común en pacientes provenientes de zonas no endémicas, como los turistas, y aparece como resultado de una respuesta inmune rápida entre la primera y la octava semana de la exposición⁵. La esquistosomiasis intestinal es una complicación crónica y más común en pacientes originarios del trópico o subtropical. Su gravedad está relacionada con la exposición recurrente y con el número de huevos del parásito presentes en la mucosa del tracto intestinal, fundamentalmente el colon y el recto, donde provocan una reacción inflamatoria y la aparición de granulomas, úlceras y fibrosis⁴. El diagnóstico se basa en datos de laboratorio inespecíficos, como la anemia y la eosinofilia, y en la demostración de la presencia de los huevos del parásito en los coprocultivos. La serología, aunque no distingue entre infección aguda y crónica, puede ser útil para el diagnóstico de esquistosomiasis en turistas con síntomas típicos a la vuelta del viaje de la zona endémica.

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Coexistence of superior mesenteric artery syndrome and phytobezoar

Coexistencia del síndrome de la arteria mesentérica superior y fitobezoar

Sr. Director:

Bezoars are collections of indigestible foreign material that accumulate and coalesce in the gastrointestinal tract (usually the stomach). Phytobezoars, composed of vegetable matter, are the most common type of bezoar and they are rarely encountered in adults with a normal intestinal tract. Their formation may occur in patients with previous history of abdominal surgery or any other anatomical or physiological disorder altering gastric motility.

Superior mesenteric artery syndrome (SMAS) is an uncommon clinical entity characterised by compression of the third segment of the duodenum against the aorta by the superior

mesenteric artery, which can cause a complete or partial duodenal obstruction. SMAS might often be overlooked in clinical practice. However, establishing the diagnosis is important because effective treatment may significantly improve the patient clinical condition and it can be a predisposing factor for other abnormalities and complications.

The recent increase in Europe occidental, especially in Spain, of the population immigrant from endemic areas of schistosomiasis, makes this disease, previously considered rare in our environment, a potential alternative diagnostic option.

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mesenteric artery, which can cause a complete or partial duodenal obstruction. SMAS might often be overlooked in clinical practice. However, establishing the diagnosis is important because effective treatment may significantly improve the patient clinical condition and it can be a predisposing factor for other abnormalities and complications.

A 50-year-old vegetarian Armenian man presented with a long-term history of recurrent abdominal postprandial discomfort, early satiety, fullness and weight loss. Three days before admission, abdominal pain suddenly increased along with episodes of nausea and vomiting, leading to feeding intolerance. He had no history of eating disorders, drug abuse or previous abdominal surgery.

Clinical examination showed moderate dehydration and abdominal distension with diffuse tenderness. Laboratory test results showed hemoconcentration and leukocytosis. Chest and abdominal plain radiography disclosed marked gastric dilatation with mild left pleural effusion. CT examination (Figs. 1 and 2) revealed fluid filled dilatation of the stomach and first and second parts of the duodenum.



Fig. 1 Axial CT image depicts dilatation of the stomach, first and second part of the duodenum. The phytobezoar is stuck at the narrowing caused by the SMA over the third portion of the duodenum. Distal collapsed intestinal loops are seen.



Fig. 2 Axial CT images five days later where the phytobezoar is not seen. Stomach relieves its dilatation and the oral contrast progress distally through the vascular compression.

The third duodenal part showed abrupt vascular compression caused by the superior mesenteric artery (SMA), and it contained a well-defined non-homogeneous circular intraluminal mass of 3 cm diameter with a mottled gas pattern. Collapsed loops of small bowel were seen immediately distal to the obstruction. Esophago-gastroduodenal endoscopy showed a semi-solid dark-greenish duodenal mass consisting of food particles and vegetable fibres. Mechanical disruption was attempted during endoscopy. Scattered ulceration and friability of the gastric and duodenal mucosa probably secondary to pressure necrosis were also found.

A nasogastric tube was inserted. Parenteral nutrition and intravenous treatment with proton-pump inhibitors were initiated. Gastric content was progressively removed and abdominal distension disappeared. An endoscopic study undertaken on the fifth day of hospitalization showed a reduction in gastro-duodenal dilatation and phytobezoar was not visible. Extrinsic compression continued to reduce the duodenal lumen but there were no signs of obstruction. Oral feeding was reintroduced and well tolerated. The patient was discharged with dietary counseling in order to avoid recurrences.

The angle of 45° formed by abdominal aorta and SMA is preserved due to the presence of fatty tissue around the

duodenum and pancreas. Any factor that reduces this fatty tissue will narrow the angle and may potentially produce the entrapment and compression of the third part of duodenum, developing the so-called SMA syndrome. Its clinical presentation ranges between a casual radiological finding in asymptomatic subjects and a symptomatic intestinal obstruction¹.

Conventional CT of the abdomen clearly depicts the abrupt extrinsic compression on the third portion of the duodenum by the SMA. Small bowel loops distal to the crossing point of the third portion of the duodenum and the SMA are collapsed. CT also rules out other pathologic processes that may mimic SMA syndrome. CT angiography with maximum intensity projection and 3D reconstruction is an useful non-invasive diagnostic technique that allows SMA visualization and its relationship with the abdominal aorta and duodenum².

There is no standardized method to treat gastric phytobezoars but non-surgical measures such as endoscopic fragmentation and removal should be the initial approach^{3,4}. Duodenal collections may often require surgery if the obstruction does not resolve promptly. On the other hand, the first line treatment of SMA syndrome is usually conservative although efficacy reported with this approach is limited⁵. Surgery should be considered for both entities when conservative measures are ineffective. Several surgical techniques have been described to treat SMA syndrome but the most successful procedure is duodenojejunostomy, using a laparoscopic approach when possible⁶.

In our case, both the SMA syndrome and the high fibre content in the patient's diet could have been predisposing factors contributing to phytobezoar formation. A decrease of alimentary intake as the result of obstructive symptoms may have contributed to weight loss and mesenteric fatty tissue reduction, accentuating the angle between the SMA and abdominal aorta. Conservative measures together with parenteral hyperalimentation successfully relieved intestinal obstruction in our patient. Endoscopic disruption of the phytobezoar was also attempted to promote spontaneous passage.

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Las arbitrariedades potenciales de la estadística

The potential arbitrariness of statistics

Sr. Director:

La falta de datos sobre patología de la población española extraída de registros nacionales en las publicaciones médicas es un hecho que puede fácilmente constatarse. Por ello, hay que felicitar a Sendra et al¹ por el trabajo publicado en el número de junio-julio 2008 en GASTROENTEROLOGÍA Y HEPATOLOGÍA, «Manejo hospitalario del cáncer de páncreas en España y estudio de los factores asociados a la mortalidad intrahospitalaria». Sin embargo, este trabajo también nos muestra la dificultad de manejar datos crudos administrativos y relacionarlos de una manera coherente

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con la práctica real para así poder extraer conclusiones, incluso con el peligro de llegar a establecer algunas un tanto extravagantes. En primer lugar, se nos plantea una cuestión que los autores quizás podrían aclarar. Dentro de los procedimientos diagnósticos estudiados hacen referencia a la gammagrafía, la ecografía abdominal y la tomografía computarizada (TC) abdominal. Los procedimientos frecuentemente empleados en el diagnóstico de cáncer de páncreas incluyen efectivamente la TC y la ecografía, además de la resonancia magnética. La ecoendoscopia se emplea cada vez más en muchos centros, por disponibilidad o por acceso a dicha prueba, ya que este procedimiento tiene una serie de ventajas diagnósticas con la posibilidad de realizar biopsias que no violen los principios oncológicos. Podemos también incluir la colangiopancreatografía retrógrada endoscópica en el arsenal de pruebas diagnósticas, aunque esta prueba se reserva actualmente sobre todo para procedimientos terapéuticos paliativos (derivaciones