

CONTINUING MEDICAL EDUCATION ΣΥΝΕΧΙΖΟΜΕΝΗ ΙΑΤΡΙΚΗ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗ

Vascular Diseases Quiz – Case 61

An 88-year-old male patient was diagnosed in our Emergency Department with pulmonary edema. Laboratory examinations revealed kidney failure stage 5 and a hemodialysis catheter was placed through the right femoral vein. A week after his discharge, the patient presented with painful swelling and significantly pale-cyanotic skin of the right extremity (fig. 1); the one that has been previously catheterized. Upon elevation, the skin colour improved slightly but persisted. Color duplex ultrasound confirmed the right iliofemoral vein thrombosis.

What is the cause of the significant edema and skin discoloration?

Phlegmasia cerulea dolens (PCD) is an uncommon form of acute deep vein thrombosis (DVT), characterized by edema, pain and blue discoloration of the lower limb, with high amputation and mortality rates, as a significant percentage of patients develop venous gangrene. Several triggering factors have been reported, but PCD is the result of multisegment thrombosis of the iliofemoral veins.

This case serves as a reminder of this rare, life-threatening form



Figure 1.

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ΑΡΧΕΙΑ ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗΣ ΙΑΤΡΙΚΗΣ 2022, 39(1):140

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of severe DVT, requiring immediate treatment. Prior guidelines suggested elevation of the affected extremity and anticoagulation as the only therapeutic means. The latest guidelines suggest interventional strategies for thrombus removal (thromboaspiration), such as surgical and catheter-based techniques to reduce the incidence of post-thrombotic syndrome and PCD. Prompt recognition of PCD is crucial to prevent complications and death.

References

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Diagnosis: Phlegmasia cerulea dolens