

CONTINUING MEDICAL EDUCATION ΣΥΝΕΧΙΖΟΜΕΝΗ ΙΑΤΡΙΚΗ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗ

Vascular Diseases Quiz – Case 65

A 72-year-old female presents with 10 kg weight loss approximately in the past 6 months and postprandial epigastric pain at approximately 15 min (fig. 1). The patient reports that due to the pain she only eats small meals despite being hungry. Past medical history includes arterial hypertension and coronary artery disease.

What are the possible differential diagnosis?

Comment

Epigastric pain in elders is a common complaint. Special attention to the medical history of the patient must be given by the physician who should question the characteristics of the pain (duration, onset in relation to meals, the date that was felt for the first time).

In this case the pain starts 15–20 minutes after meals, it is a deep blunt abdominal pain without a specific location. Painkillers did not affect the pain and it automatically and gradually resolves 30–45 minutes after the meal. The patient mentioned that it may have started more than 6 months ago.

The list of differential diagnosis includes many possible pathologies –even malignancy– and the workup should include full blood count, basic biochemistry checks, ultrasound and gradually include an abdominal computed tomography (CT) scan (fig. 1A). However, due to the reported characteristics of the pain, chronic mesenteric

ischemia (CMI) must be investigated with priority.

CMI is a severe disease characterized by postprandial pain and weight loss, and occurs when visceral vessels develop high grade stenosis or occlusions. Early therapy for the symptomatic disease is important to prevent cachexia and end-organ ischemia.

One should start with ultrasound of mesenteric arteries (celiac, superior mesenteric, inferior mesenteric), and if necessary CT angiography of these vessels must be performed.

Today, the endovascular approach (fig. 1B) has largely replaced open surgery as the first-line treatment with positive outcomes for the often elder and frail patients who suffer from CMI.

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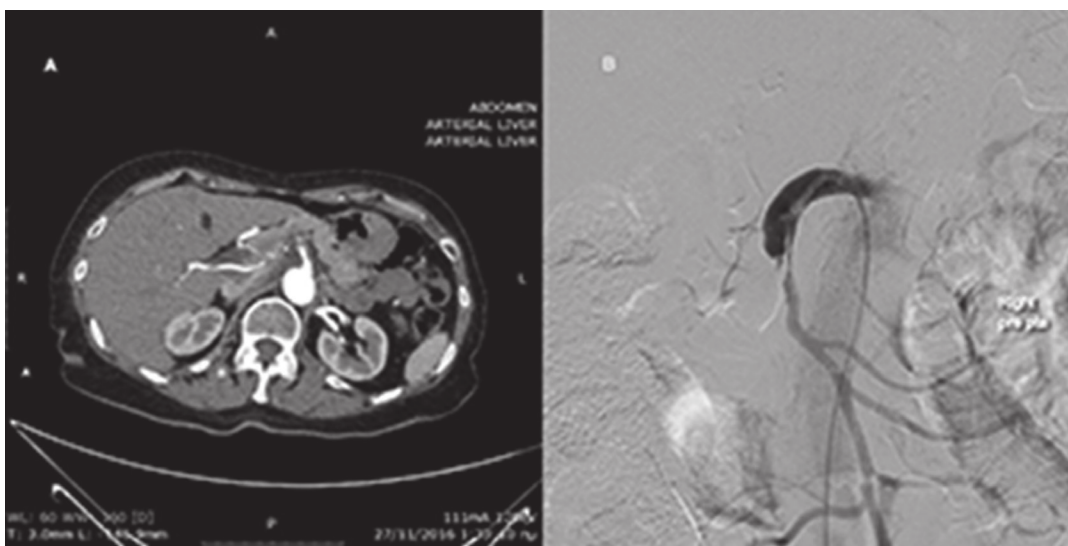


Figure 1

Diagnosis: Chronic mesenteric ischemia