Extensive Diverticulosis of the Small Intestine

Merav Leiba MD, Eli Konen MD and Yechezkel Sidi MD

Departments of *Medicine C and *Diagnostic Imaging, Sheba Medical Center, Tel Hashomer, Israel
Affiliated to Sackler Faculty of Medicine, Tel Aviv University, Ramat Aviv, Israel

Key words: diverticulosis, small intestine, jejunum, malabsorption

An 81 year old woman had a 1 month history of vomiting and watery diarrhea. Her physical examination was unremarkable. Laboratory results showed leukocytosis (14,000 white blood cells/cm³), normocytic anemia (hemoglobin 11 mg/dl, mean corpuscular volume 95 fl), chloride 120 mEq/L, potassium 3.2 mEq/L, total cholesterol 39 mg/dl, albumin 2.4 g/dl and globulin 2.1 g/dl. Stool samples were negative for bacteria, ova and parasites. Gastroscopy, colonoscopy and abdominal computerized tomography were all unremarkable. Small bowel series (Figure) showed multiple large diverticula in the jejunum (indicated by asterisks). The patient was treated with antibiotics (ofloxacin, metronidazole) and vitamin supplementation, with complete resolution of her symptoms 1 month after her discharge.

Primary acquired jejuno-ileal diverticulosis is formed by herniation of mucosa and submucosa through the muscular layer of the bowel wall (false diverticula). Small bowel diverticula are rare, but their complications are not exceptional (6-13%), with a death rate that can reach 40% in older patients [1]. Small intestinal diverticulosis may be the underlying cause of vague chronic abdominal symptomatology or of malabsorption and anemia, as in our patient [2]. Acute complications include diverticulitis, perforation, acute bowel obstruction and intestinal hemorrhage, mostly massive [3].

A finding of multiple diverticula of the small intestine, such as in our patient, should not be regarded as insignificant, but rather explains both chronic symptoms and acute complications.

References


Correspondence: Dr. Y. Sidi, Dept. of Medicine C, Sheba Medical Center, Tel Hashomer 52621, Israel.
Phone: (972-3) 530-2464
Fax: (972-3) 530-2011
email: y.sidi@post.tau.ac.il