Emergency treatment of a salmonella-infected abdominal aortic aneurysm associated with spondylodiscitis

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Introduction

Although the most common clinical presentation of Salmonella infection is gastroenteritis, a rare but increasing number of aneurysms as a consequence of Salmonellosis can be observed in clinical setting accounting for 35% of all mycotic aneurysms. These aneurysms can be associated with a high rate of morbidity and mortality, mainly in patients with a concurrent infection of the spine and paravertebral tissue. Therefore an early diagnosis is crucial, leading to prompt combined antimicrobial and surgical management. We present a patient with a rupture of a mycotic abdominal aortic aneurysm infected with Salmonella that spread to the adjacent lumbar vertebra, who underwent surgical treatment in emergency setting.

Case report

A 69-year-old male with an history of hypertension, presented with an acute and increasing abdominal pain with...
radiation to the spine, associated with septic fever (>38°C). The patient was previously evaluated in a primary care institution with a diagnosis of acute spondylodiscitis, but the pharmacological therapy was not effective on clinical course. At the admission in our emergency department one month later, the first clinical examination revealed an abdominal pulsatile mass with systolic bruit. Laboratory investigations demonstrated an increased white cell count (>13,000/mmc) and high blood level of alkaline phosphatase (130 U.I./L). A computed tomography (CT) scan showed the presence of an iuxtarenal abdominal aortic aneurysm with spondylodiscitis and erosion of the vertebral bones (Fig. 1a-b). Because of poor clinical conditions, an emergency surgical treatment was advocated. At the operation a paraortic saccular false aneurysm was found arising from the lateral wall of the abdominal aorta close to right renal artery. Fluid specimens were collected from the sac for culture. After surgical debridment the affected segment of aorta was replaced with straight Dacron graft impregnated with Sulbactam ampicilline and Gentamycine (Gelsoft Vascutek Terumo, Inchinnan Renfrewshire, UK). The postoperative course was uneventful and the patient was discharged at day 20 after the index procedure in good clinical condition, with a substantial decrease of pain and no signs of infection. The results of intraoperative culture yielded gram-negative bacilli, which were identified as non-typhoidal Salmonella (type H). The microorganism was sensitive to Teicoplanine, Meropenem, and Ciprofloxacine and related therapy was continued for 8 weeks. Two months after the procedure, the pain was completely disappeared and CT scan showed residual signs of infection in the aortic region confirmed by scintigraphy using leukocytes marked with 99m-Tc-HMPAO (Fig. 2). A CT scan 21 months after the procedure showed complete anatomic resolution of the disease (Fig. 3), confirmed by the results of blood samples analysis (C-reactive protein, procalcitonine, and erythrocyte sedimentation rate test).
Discussion

The most common clinical presentation of Salmonella infection is gastroenteritis which is usually self-limited. Arterial aneurysms may present after Salmonellosis as a consequence of particular predilection of this germ for arterial walls and may be associated with a wide variety of Salmonella types. The reported risk for endovascular infection in patients with bacteremia due to non-typhoidal Salmonella is 23%. Infrarenal abdominal aorta is the most frequent site of Salmonella vascular infections followed by the thoracoabdominal tract, accounting for 0.65% of all aortic aneurysms and for 35% of all mycotic aneurysms. These aneurysms are characterized by saccular, multilobulate, periaortic soft tissue stranding and irregular peripheral enhancement of arterial walls trend to rapid expansion, and involvement of the vertebral spine. Rupture is the most common symptom of presentation in patients affected by Salmonella-infected aneurysms and the diagnosis is occasionally made during emergency laparotomies for acute bleeding. However, an increasing number of patients can be observed before rupture with misunderstanding symptoms leading to late diagnosis and poor outcome. According with other reports, our patient presented with spondylodiscitis resulting from contiguous spread of Salmonella infection from the adjacent abdominal aorta, that was lately recognized requiring an operative treatment in critical conditions. In similar cases a prompt diagnostic suspicion on the basis of clinical examination, laboratory and imaging study enables an early antimicrobial and surgical treatment with a lower mortality rate.

The treatment of Salmonella infected aneurysms respects the general principles of surgical management of mycotic aneurysms including complete resection of infected tissue, placement of an axillo-bifemoral bypass or “in situ” prosthetic graft through a clean, non-septic tissue plane, and long-term IV antimicrobial therapy up to 2 months. However, because of the frequent involvement of
suprarenal aorta, alternative techniques for open repair of pararenal aortic aneurysms should be performed. The use of endovascular repair in mycotic aneurysms may be attractive providing a good alternative in critical condition, but a word of caution has to be spent concerning the placement of an endoprosthesis in a Salmonella-infected field. An endovascular exclusion should be used as a temporary measure waiting for the identification of infection leading to improve the antimicrobial therapy and a more definite surgical treatment.

Regardless the type of surgical management, the perioperative antimicrobial therapy prolonged for at least 4-6 weeks has to be considered as relevant component of clinical approach because Salmonella infection is difficult to eradicate in arterial lesions and new infections can appear long after successful surgical treatment, with a reported mortality rate up to 45% . In our patient the reported outcome was favourable in spite of an emergency one-stage surgical treatment performed in severe clinical conditions. We have to consider good results strongly related with meticulous long term antimicrobial therapy.

Conclusions

Arterial aneurysms may present after Salmonellosis having a high risk of morbidity and mortality, mainly in patients with a concurrent infection of the spine and paravertebral tissue. Combined antimicrobial therapy and one-stage surgical treatment can be associated with good outcome.

References