

Title:
Idiopathic portal hypertension with regard to thiopurine treatment

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SEPO

Editorial Colitis diverticular bleeding. Have we identified the risk factors for massive bleeding yet? J. W. Berman Valencia	65
Trabajos Originales Risk factors for severity and recurrence of colonic diverticular bleeding N. Azupard, P. Cabero, A. Arduini, M. Escobar and N. Guzmán	67
Menopausal and inflammatory bowel disease: the other Giuseppe J. Bernal, A. Rojas, S. López-Castaño, J. Cuervo, M. Acuña-Barca, M. Hernández-Serra, C. García, M. de la Cruz, D. Bernal and A. López-Castaño	69
Influence of sustained 48-hr response on the regression of fibrosis and portal hypertension in cirrhotic HCV patients treated with antiviral therapy A. Riestra, J. Cabero, M. J. López-Alba, I. L. Fariña, M. T. Arce, A. Galván, F. Castiella, E. Fabregat and J. Crespo	70
Malnutrition risk questionnaire combined with body composition measurement to monitor liver screening in inflammatory bowel disease A. A. Cortés, A. Muñoz, Z. Pili, I. Pall and P. Muñoz	71
A survey-based analysis of endoscopic quality indicators compliance among Spanish endoscopists I. Fernández-Cruz, F. Argüelles, P. Alonso, J. Salas and S. Soriano	76
Revisión Endoscopic resection of colorectal polyps in patients on antiplatelet therapy: an evidence-based guideline for clinicians G. Piana, M. Sostero-Salán, C. Salinas, F. Day and M. J. Cuervo	79
Indicaciones en Patología Digestiva Neutrophils in the appendix: a marker of inflammation J. Sempere, P. Albaladejo, J. C. García-Pérez	80
Neutrophils in the appendix: a marker of inflammation A. F. Romero-Muñoz and V. Barrio-Zelga	81
Neutrophils in the appendix: a marker of inflammation C. Oba, S. Oba, C. C. Hernández, J. J. Pineda-Rodríguez and N. González-Fernández	81
Endoscopic removal of leiomyomas in a sclerosing patient J. L. Bernal-Hernández, M. E. Torres-Castro and M. Torres-Rodríguez	83
All that glitters is not gold. A different cause for an "idiopathic colitis" A. Pineda, M. Soto, J. Vitor-Barceló and G. Navarro	83
Lesión de Bouveret: diagnóstico por gastroscopia R. Barrio-Gómez, M. N. Barrio-Frutos, M. del Pozo y J. E. Domínguez Muñoz	85
Notas Clínicas Colitis crónica en adultos: a case report and review of the literature focusing in the presentation of subacute-onset M. de Alaveda-Nemón, V. L. Barrio-Cabral and S. L. Lopera	87
Hemangiomas: benign pathologic. Liver localization infrequent de tumor vascular? I. Alonso-Albaladejo, J. M. García-Cerdillo, L. Aguirre-Díaz, A. M. Quintana-Rivero y A. Colla-Morales	89
Hemangioma por embolia pulmonar intracavitaria C. Pérez-Carpas, A. Escobedo-Sánchez, M. A. Paredes-Capó, J. Arangul-Arribas y C. García-Delgado	90
Endoscopic removal of intubated large sigmoid polyp: a case report M. Ochoa-García and J. Torres-Munoz	93
Mesenteric schwannoma: an unusual cause of abdominal mass A. Tapia-Palacio, M. R. Ramos-Vázquez, J. C. Cortés-Ramos, J. Cornejo-Lara and L. Cortés-Pérez	96
Cartas al Editor Neoplasia neuroendocrina intestinal, un tumor poco habitual M. de Barrio-Sanz, J. Santos-Fernández and M. N. Ramos-Rodríguez	99
Prevalencia intestinal de tuberculosis por indicación profiláctica en el paciente oncológico a través de Biopsias, patología infecciosa y genes asociados Y. Pineda-Vargas, D. M. Acosta y L. A. Álvarez	100
Parasitología: evidencia para un paciente con múltiples endoparasitosis Y. Pineda-Vargas, D. M. Acosta y L. A. Álvarez	101
Actualización y endoscopia: endoscopia, endoscopia, endoscopia C. Sánchez-Sánchez, L. Guevara-Nieto y J. A. Acosta-Paredes	101
Perforación múltiple de divertículos de intestino delgado en paciente con síndrome de Ulceras Quíricas R. Hernández-Castro, A. Burgos-Castro y E. Palencia-López	103
Altophilia anular como manifestación paraneoplásica de un adenoma actínico gástrico J. Barrio-Otero, F. Fernández-Serrano y J. de la Fuente-Aguado	103
Revisores 2016	105

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Idiopathic portal hypertension with regard to thiopurine treatment

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Dear Editor,

We read with interest the paper “Idiopathic portal hypertension regarding thiopurine treatment in patients with inflammatory bowel disease” (1), which was recently published in this journal. The paper reported four cases of idiopathic portal hypertension (IPH). In this letter, we would like to comment on a recent case treated at our unit.

Case report

We present the case of a 76-year-old male with ileocolic Crohn’s disease treated with azathioprine. After ten years of treatment, he presented with a severe outbreak that required a resection of the terminal ileum. During the intervention, non-purulent ascites were observed which were culture negative. One month later, he presented with low-grade fever, abdominal pain and grade 2 ascites. The paracentesis showed a transudate without infection criteria, negative ascites and blood cultures. Empirical treatment with broad-spectrum antibiotics was initiated. The ascitic fluid had a serum ascites albumin gradient of 11 g/l that was compatible with portal hypertension. A

computed tomography (CT) scan identified a homogeneous liver of a normal size and appearance, a splenomegaly of 13 cm and ascites. Endoscopy revealed small esophageal varices. The portal hemodynamics had a normal portosystemic gradient of 5 mmHg, compatible with presinusoidal portal hypertension. A liver biopsy identified hepatoportal sclerosis with mild changes due to nodular regenerative hyperplasia (NRH) (Fig. 1).

Discussion

Hepatoportal sclerosis and NRH are part of the spectrum of IPH. The lesion usually occurs insidiously and thrombocytopenia is usually the first manifestation (2). The natural history is not well established. However, cases of histological regression have been described with the withdrawal of the drug (3). However, it is usually diagnosed late due to its asymptomatic nature. Some studies show that lower levels of 6-TGN indicate a lower incidence of IPH and therefore, monitoring is recommended (4). It is important to guide the pathologist in a case of clinical suspicion; one study reported a $k = 0.20$ for NRH when the clinical information was inadequate (5).

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Fig. 1. A. Hematoxylin-eosin staining, 400x. Hepatoportal sclerosis. Portal space with the presence of a bile duct and an arteriole (*) with the absence of the portal vein. B. Hematoxylin-eosin staining, 200x. Mild changes of nodular regenerative hyperplasia, with hypertrophic hepatocytes that seem to compress other surrounding hepatocytes of an atrophic appearance.

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