

Title:

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Esophageal lichen planus: a rare cause of dysphagia

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Dear Editor,

In January 2018, Teixeira et al. (1) published a case of an esophageal lichen planus (ELP) in the Spanish Journal of Gastroenterology (REED). Here we present a new case that was also associated with dysplasia and is reminiscent of the malignant potential of this entity.

Case report

A 62-year-old female with a history of oral lichen planus was referred to our unit due to dysphagia. Endoscopy identified a thickened mucosa with white plaque-like lesions and longitudinal striations. Esophageal biopsies showed a diffuse spongiotic change with some Civatte bodies. A plaque with low-grade dysplasia was identified in the middle third of the esophagus (Fig. 1). The patient started treatment with glucocorticoids and azathioprine, with clinical improvement and endoscopic stability.

Discussion

The majority of patients with ELP are middle-aged females. Proposed etiologies include a reaction to medication, hepatitis C infection or autoimmune processes. However, the exact etiology and pathogenesis are still unknown (2). Dysphagia is the most common

symptom and the ELP may extend along the entire esophagus, although proximal involvement is more frequent.

Teixeira et al. previously commented that endoscopic findings are not specific as pseudomembranes, ulcers and even stenosis can be found. Treatment generally starts with oral glucocorticoid (prednisone 40-60 mg daily), and immunosuppressive therapy with azathioprine, tacrolimus, cyclosporine or rituximab are also used in severe cases (3).

Although its malignant potential is not understood with certainty, some cases of squamous cell carcinoma have been reported. Generally, these tumors are slow growing and well-differentiated, with a characteristic appearance of an irregular exophytic mass. We recommend establishing a follow-up program with annual endoscopic surveillance using high-magnification chromoendoscopy (4,5).

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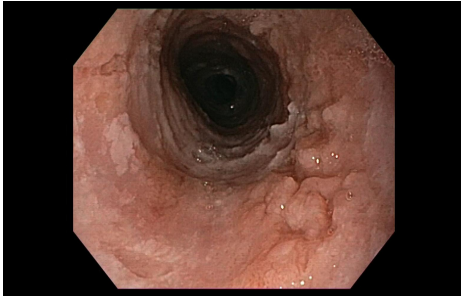


Fig. 1. Endoscopy image of a plaque with low-grade dysplasia in the middle third of the esophagus.