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A surprising white thread on a terminal ileoscopy

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A 54-year-old woman without relevant medical history complained of intermittent crampy abdominal pain in the right quadrants lasting at least one year. She denied diarrhea, constipation, weight loss or blood in the stool. Physical examination and laboratory investigation were unremarkable. An abdominal ultrasound showed hepatic steatosis. A screening colonoscopy was performed and after intubation of the terminal ileum, a whitish filament with approximately 5 cm (figure 1) was found and retrieved. The macroscopic observation is shown in figure 2a. The parasitological examination (figure 2 b-d) confirmed the diagnosis of *Hymenolepis nana*.

Hymenolepis nana is the most common cestode globally, albeit infrequent in adults (2). Infection is more common in populations living with inadequate sanitation and generally occurs upon ingestion of cysticercoid-infected arthropods or embryonated eggs from contaminated water and foods. *H. nana* entire life cycle can



be established in the gut making self-infection possible, and subsequently it can persist for many years if left untreated, especially in immunosuppressed hosts. Although often asymptomatic, albeit skin eruptions, chronic urticaria and phlyctenular eye disease have been reported (1, 3). Traditionally, the identification of worms or eggs in feces allows the diagnosis and the recommended treatment is a single dose of praziquantel 25 mg/kg *per os* followed by repeat dose 10 days later.

This case illustrates a *H. nana* infection in an immunocompetent adult in a developed country where it is considered to be rare. Ileoscopy remains an important aspect for differential diagnosis when performing colonoscopy for abdominal pain.

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Fig. 1. Whitish parasite with approximately 5 cm found upon terminal ileum intubation and recovered through traction with biopsy forceps during colonoscope withdrawal.



Fig. 2. A) Gross anatomy of the worm. The adult worms measure up to 40 mm and have a life span of 4 to 6 weeks (1). B) Light microscopy: proglottids (x 100) and C) eggs of *Hymenolepis nana* (x 400).

