Duodenal stenosis associated with an ectopic opening of the common bile duct into the duodenal bulb: a case report

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Abstract

Background: Ectopic opening of the common bile duct is a rare congenital biliary anomaly. Herein, we present a case of duodenal stenosis with ectopic opening of the common bile duct into the duodenal bulb.

Case presentation: A 54-year-old man was referred with fever, nausea, and vomiting. He had experienced epigastric pain several times over the past 30 years. Endoscopy showed a post-bulbar ulcer, a submucosal tumor of the duodenum, and a small opening with bile secretion. Contrast duodenography revealed duodenal stenosis and bile reflux with a common bile duct deformity. Pancreatoduodenectomy was performed because of the clinical suspicion of a biliary neoplasm or groove pancreatitis. The resected specimen showed an ectopic opening of the common bile duct into the duodenal bulb and no tumor.

Conclusions: Ectopic opening of the common bile duct into the duodenal bulb is complicated by a duodenal ulcer, deformity, and stenosis mimicking groove pancreatitis or pancreatic tumors. Although rare, we should be aware of this anomaly for an accurate diagnosis.

Keywords: Ectopic opening of the common bile duct, Duodenal ulcer, Duodenal stenosis, Groove pancreatitis

Background

Various opening sites have been described in the literature of the ectopic opening of the common bile duct (EOCBD), such as the 3rd or 4th portion of the duodenum, pyloric canal, duodenal bulb, and stomach. Some cases of EOCBD in the duodenal bulb develop complications such as duodenal ulcers, deformities, biliary stones, tumors, and stenosis [1–19]. Herein, we present a case of duodenal stenosis with EOCBD in the duodenal bulb.

Case presentation

A 54-year-old man visited a local clinic with complaints of fever, nausea, and vomiting. Laboratory studies revealed elevated serum aspartate aminotransferase of 42 IU/L, serum alanine transferase of 199 IU/L, serum γ-glutamyl transpeptidase of 602 IU/L, and serum lipase of 61 U/L. Endoscopy revealed a duodenal submucosal tumor. The patient was referred to our hospital for further investigation. He had a gastroduodenal ulcer and experienced occasional epigastric pain for the past 30 years. He received treatment for eradication of Helicobacter pylori at 43 years of age. Endoscopy at our hospital revealed stenosis of the duodenal bulb, which was suspected to be caused by a submucosal tumor and an active ulcer (Fig. 1A and B). In addition, bile excretion was only observed in a small opening near the ulcer (Fig. 1C). Abdominal computed tomography (CT)
revealed normal findings in the duodenum, but gas in the bile ducts (pneumobilia). Contrast duodenography showed duodenal stenosis and reflux of the bile with a bile duct deformity (Fig. 2). Magnetic resonance cholangiopancreatography (MRCP) showed severe angulation of the CBD (appearing as a hook-shaped configuration), which opened at a different site from the pancreatic duct (Fig. 3). Endoscopic ultrasonography revealed hypoechoic lesion in the 2nd portion of the duodenum which was originating from the muscularis propria. It was difficult to distinguish inflammatory thickening from submucosal tumor. Endoscopic ultrasound fine-needle aspiration revealed inflammatory cells, and no evidence of neoplastic cells. Positron emission tomography CT showed [18F]-fluorodeoxyglucose (FDG) accumulation in the 2nd portion of the duodenum (standard uptake value—MAX: 4.15), but the delayed phase showed a decrease in accumulation. Based on these test results, a suspected diagnosis of groove pancreatitis was made, but with the findings of duodenal stenosis and hook-shaped CBD, the
possibility of biliary neoplasm complicating choledocho-duodenal fistula was also entertained. There was the possibility of malignancy; and surgical management was considered the rational treatment for the symptomatic groove pancreatitis, so we decided to perform pancreaticoduodenectomy. The patient’s complaints were relieved, and the laboratory data improved after surgery. The resected specimen revealed the papilla of Vater located in the 2nd portion of the duodenum, and the CBD opened approximately 2 cm proximal to the papilla of Vater (Fig. 4). Histologically, the CBD opening had no sphincter muscles (Fig. 5A). The duodenum proximal to the opening of the CBD was stenotic due to ulceration and fibrosis. The CBD and pancreatic duct were separate openings with epithelial cells (Fig. 5A and B). These findings correlated with the diagnosis of EO CBD into the duodenal bulb.

Discussion
Here, we have reported a case of duodenal stenosis with EO CBD. The true incidence of patients with an EO CBD into the duodenal bulb is unclear. Sezgin et al. [11] reported that 1.05% of patients undergoing endoscopic retrograde cholangiopancreatography (ERCP) had an EO CBD at various sites of the upper digestive tract, such as the pyloric canal, stomach, and duodenal bulb. In a previous study by Lee et al. 18 out of 16,541 patients who underwent ERCP had an EO CBD into the duodenal bulb [4]. Taş et al. reported that 20 out of 3270 patients who underwent ERCP had an EO CBD into the duodenal bulb (0.61%) [8].

As in our case, EO CBD patients are usually elderly men. Erkan et al. reported that 49 out of the 53 patients were male. Lee et al. and Lee et al. reported that 7 out of 8 and 15 out of 18 patients were males, respectively [3, 4].

The cases of EO CBD into the duodenal bulb have characteristic clinical features. One such feature is duodenal ulcer. Lee et al. [4] and Taş et al. [18] reported that 13 out of 18 patients (72%) and 16 out of 20 patients (80%) had a history of duodenal ulcers, respectively. Duodenal ulcers may be associated with apical stenosis or deformity. In a previous study, 13 out of 18 patients with EO CBD had active duodenal ulcers, and 9 out of 13 patients had duodenal deformity [4].

The cause of the association between duodenal deformity and ulcers is not clearly known. Lee et al. associated the increased incidence of duodenal ulcer and deformity with the constant exposure of the duodenal bulb to bile acid [3]. Bile reflux into the duodenal bulb causes an increase in pH. At high pH, bile acids may cause gastric and duodenal bulb mucosal damage [7, 8, 11, 12, 15]. Previous reports also suggest that bicarbonate in pancreatic secretion contributes to the increase in the pH in the bulb, leading to recurrent duodenal ulcer and deformity [12]. The presence of pancreatic secretion, in addition to bile, seems to be necessary for the development of deformity, ulcers, and stenosis.

Another feature is recurrent cholangitis, with or without stones. Reflux cholangitis may occur due to the absence of the sphincter muscles. These patients are often treated surgically or endoscopically. During endoscopic balloon dilation, satisfactory placement of a balloon catheter through an ectopic opening is difficult because of the angulated distal CBD and the high risk of perforation or bleeding [11, 12, 19]. Therefore, surgical treatment is a better alternative. This characteristic angulation of the distal CBD is called a “hook-like” appearance [3]. In our case, the CBD showed the “hook-like” deformity. Table 1
shows the past reported series of bile duct anomaly with the occurrence rate, duodenal ulcer rate, cholangitis rate, and treatment approaches [3–9, 11, 12, 14, 15, 17–20].

In our case, one of the differential diagnoses was groove pancreatitis. Lee et al. reported a case of EOCBD accompanied by groove pancreatitis [9]. Groove pancreatitis is a segmental chronic pancreatitis that affects the anatomical area between the pancreatic head, duodenum, and common bile duct, which is referred to as the groove area [20]. Conservative treatment or endoscopic drainage of the minor papilla is effective for treating groove pancreatitis [9, 21]. However, surgical procedures, such as pancreatoduodenectomy or pylorus-preserving pancreaticoduodenectomy, are the treatment of choice when the symptoms do not improve, or when the differential diagnosis includes pancreatic carcinoma [20, 22–25]. Pezzilli et al. [22] and Sanada et al. [23] reported that 72% and 55% of patients underwent surgery, respectively, for such reasons. Iemoto et al. [24] reported a case that underwent pancreaticoduodenectomy for groove pancreatitis associated with a duodenal ulcer, similar to our case.

**Conclusions**

EOCBD into the duodenal bulb may be associated with biliary and duodenal diseases, such as recurrent duodenal ulcers. Therefore, EOCBD into the duodenal bulb should be considered in patients with recurrent duodenal ulcers and duodenal stenosis.
**Table 1** The past report of EOCBD into the duodenal bulb

| No. | Author         | Year | Number of cases | Duodenal ulcer (n) | Duodenal stenosis (n) | Cholangitis (n) | Treatment | References |
|-----|----------------|------|-----------------|--------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|-----------|------------|
|     |                |      |                 |                    |                       |                 | Surgical treatment |           |
|     |                |      |                 |                    |                       |                 | BB (n)     | PD (n)     | Others (n) |
| 1   | Lee et al      | 1997 | 8               | 7                  | –                     | 5               | 6          | 1          | 1          | [3]        |
| 2   | Lee et al      | 2003 | 18              | 13                 | 9                     | 7               | 12         | 1          | 4          | 1          | [4]        |
| 3   | Krstic et al   | 2005 | 1               | 0                  | 1                     | 1               | 1          |            |            |            | [7]        |
| 4   | Disibeyaz et al| 2007 | 53              | 8                  | 26                    | 23              | 8          | 28         | 17         | [8]        |
| 5   | Song et al     | 2007 | 1               | 1                  | 0                     | 1               | 1          |            |            |            | [11]       |
| 6   | Sezgin et al   | 2010 | 10              | 2                  | –                     | 3               | 4          | 1          | 3          | 2          | [20]       |
| 7   | Salitas et al  | 2010 | 9               | 7                  | –                     | –               | 3          | 3          | 3          | [12]       |
| 8   | Parlak et al   | 2010 | 74              | –                  | –                     | 30              | 3          | 13         | 60         | 1          | [5]        |
| 9   | Üsküdar et al  | 2012 | 1               | 0                  | 1                     | 1               | –          |            |            |            | [6]        |
| 10  | Lee et al      | 2015 | 1               | 0                  | 0                     | 1               | 1          |            |            |            | [9]        |
| 11  | Takikawa et al | 2016 | 1               | 0                  | 0                     | 1               | –          |            |            |            | [14]       |
| 12  | Taş et al      | 2018 | 20              | 16                 | 16                    | 12              | –          |            |            |            | [15]       |
| 13  | Lee et al      | 2019 | 1               | 1                  | 0                     | 0               | –          |            |            |            | [17]       |
| 14  | Peng et al     | 2019 | 8               | 3                  | 8                     | 3               | 1          |            |            |            | [18]       |
| 15  | Muhammedoğlu et al | 2019 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 |            |            |            |            | [19]       |

**Total, n (%)**  
208  58 (43.2)  61 (57)  90 (45.2)  29 (14.5)  2 (1)  36 (18)  107 (53.5)  26 (13)

*BB* biliointer bypass, *PD* pancreaticoduodenectomy, – not mentioned about it
Abbreviations
EOCBD: Ectopic opening of common bile duct; CT: Computed tomography; ERCP: Endoscopic retrograde cholangiopancreatography; FDG: Fluorodeoxyglucose; BB: Bilioenteric bypass; PD: Pancreaticoduodenectomy.

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Author contributions
KK and MI were involved in drafting the manuscript, revising it critically for important intellectual content, and have made substantial contributions to data acquisition. HS, NM, and NK analyzed and interpreted the patient data and contributed to the manuscript preparation. HT made substantial contributions to the conception and design. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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Availability of data and materials
The datasets used and/or analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Declarations

Ethics approval and consent to participate
This case report has been approved by our institute's committee on Human Research.

Consent for publication
Written informed consent for publication of their clinical details and/or clinical images was obtained from the patient.

Competing interests
The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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