ABSTRACT

Budd-Chiari syndrome occurs due to obstruction of hepatic venous out-flow which in turn produces intense congestion of the liver. Systemic Lupus Erythematosus (SLE), which is an auto-immune disorder has protean manifestations such as easy fatiguability, arthralgia, photosensitivity, malar rash, fever, alopecia but our case had an unique association of ascites and hepatosplenomegaly due to Budd Chiari syndrome stemming from the root cause of Antiphospholipid antibody syndrome (APLA) is very rare. SLE accounts for 40% of the cases of APLA. SLE presenting with Budd-Chiari syndrome as an early manifestation is unusual and is rarely reported in the literature. Here we report a rare case of a young female who presented with abdominal distension, abdominal pain and fever diagnosed to have Budd-Chiari syndrome as a presenting feature of SLE and on further evaluation she was also found to have antiphospholipid syndrome secondary to SLE.

Keywords: Antiphospholipid syndrome; SLE; Budd-Chiari syndrome.
1. INTRODUCTION

Autoimmune disorders like Systemic Lupus Erythematosus (SLE) usually presents with fatigability, malar rash, fever, arthralgia, photosensitivity, alopecia but rarely presents with Budd-Chiari syndrome stemming from the root cause of Antiphospholipid antibody syndrome (APLA). Budd-Chiari syndrome is caused by obstruction of hepatic venous outflow which produces intense congestion of the liver [1]. In Budd-Chiari syndrome the smaller hepatic veins are often spared while involving all the three major hepatic veins. Antiphospholipid syndrome is characterised by the production of autoantibodies directed against phospholipids and phospholipid binding plasma proteins associated with multiple thromboembolic events. The common manifestations are recurrent foetal loss followed by portal vein thrombosis, mesenteric thrombosis, iliofemoral thrombosis and lastly Budd-Chiari syndrome [2]. SLE accounts for 40% of the cases of APLA. SLE presenting with Budd-Chiari syndrome as an early manifestation is unusual and rarely reported in the literature. Here, we report a young female who presented with abdominal distension, abdominal pain and fever diagnosed to have Budd-Chiari syndrome. On further evaluation, she was found to have antiphospholipid syndrome secondary to SLE.

2. CASE REPORT

A 21 year old married female with no known comorbidities, presented with abdominal distension which was progressive over the period of 2 weeks which was associated with dull aching poorly localized abdominal pain. There was initially no history of swelling of legs, joint pain, photosensitivity, oral ulcers, jaundice, hematemesis, melena or altered sensorium. H/o cough with expectoration since 15 days which was mucoid in consistency. H/o vomiting since 15 days, 2-3 episodes/day, containing food particles, non-bilious, non-blood stained, or non-projectile. H/o recurrent headache since 2 weeks, on and off, bilateral and associated with nausea. She noticed right lower limb pain and swelling which was associated with low grade fever for past 2 days. H/o amenorrhhea present for 3 months. Patient had H/o urinary tract infection 15 days back and was treated with antibiotics; details not available. H/o seizures 2 episodes at the age of 16 years and was not evaluated. H/o jaundice at the age of 6 years and was treated and no further episodes of jaundice. H/o blood transfusions 2 times in the past 5 years; not fully evaluated. H/o weight gain (10 kgs in a month). H/o decreased appetite and disturbed sleep. On examination, Patient was conscious, coherent and oriented. She had pallor and unilateral tender pitting pedal edema of the right lower limb. Her heart rate was 123/min, BP was 100/80mmHg, respiratory rate was 21/min, SPO2 was 99% in R.A and JVP was not elevated. On systemic examination abdomen was distended, flanks were full, umbilicus was shifted downwards. She had tender hepatomegaly with a liver span of 19 cm and shifting dullness was present. Other systemic examination was normal.

Laboratory findings were as enclosed in Table-1. Peripheral smear shows microcytic hypochromic, anisopoikilocytosis, elliptocytes, platelets around 1 lakh/cu.mm. C-reactive protein (mg/dl) – 78.45(reactive), direct coomb’s test – positive. QBC for MP, smear for MP/ MF, dengue serology and urine pregnancy test were negative. Ascitic fluid analysis revealed high SAAG high protein ascites with normal cytology and no growth of organisms. Thyroid function test were normal. COVID-19 RTPCR, blood cultures and sputum for AFB were negative. USG abdomen showed hepatomegaly with liver size of 19 cm with early chronic liver disease, moderate ascites, splenomegaly with normal status of the kidneys. CECT abdomen showed thrombosis of the right hepatic vein (Fig-1), features suggestive of Budd-chiari syndrome and a small splenic infarct. Lower limb venous Doppler study was done which revealed right lower limb deep vein thrombosis involving ilio-femoral veins. Thromboelastography showed a hyper-coagulable state. Platelet function assay showed prolongation of collagen/epinephrine and collagen/ADP test results ruling out aspirin induced platelet dysfunction and reinforcing the presence of anaemia and thrombocytopenia. ANA was positive and shows 3+ homogenous pattern. IgM and IgG antibodies to beta-2 glycoprotein complex, lupus anti-coagulant and anti-cardiolipin were positive. Ds-DNA (ELISA)/(IU/ml) - 809 .C3 level(mg/dl) – 77.3 .C4 level(mg/dl) – 7.3. She was started on therapeutic anticoagulation and venoplasty of the right hepatic vein was done after the resolution of thrombocytopenia. On 1 month of follow up, she had improved clinically and there were no further thrombotic episodes. She is currently on anticoagulation, diuretics for ascites, hydroxychloroquine and prophylactic measures.
for chronic liver disease. She has been vaccinated against hepatitis-B, streptococcus pneumonia and haemophilus influenza. She is on constant follow-up for the same. Patient is planned for repeat antiphospholipid antibody panel in near future.

**Table 1. Investigations done on day -1 and day-3 of admission**

| Test               | ON day 1 | ON day 3       |
|--------------------|----------|----------------|
| HB                 | 7.8      | 8.1            |
| PLATELET COUNT     | 67,000   | 32,000         |
| ESR(mm)            | 83       |                |
| PT(seconds)         | Control - 11.6, Test - 19.10 | Control – 11.7-16.1, Test – 15.2 |
| INR                | 1.66     | 1.29           |
| AST(U/L)           | 59       | 52             |
| ALT(U/L)           | 25       | 27             |
| URINE ALBUMIN      | TRACE    | 3+             |
| URINE RBC’S        |          | 8-10/HPF       |
| APTT(seconds)       | Control – 26.4, Test – 50.30 | Control – 27.8 – 40.4, Test - 61 |

**Table 2. Investigations done on day – 1,2 and 3 of admission**

| TEST                | Day 1 | Day 3 | Day 5 |
|---------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| IRON (mcg%)         | 28    |       | 285   |
| TIBC (mcg%)         |       | 285   |       |
| VITAMIN-B12 ( pg/ml)| 710   |       |       |
| FOLIC ACID(ng/ml)   | 4.3   |       |       |
| FIBRINOGEN (mg/dl)  | 510   |       | 1040  |
| 24HRS URINE VOLUME  |       | 1040  |       |
| 24HRS URINE PROTEIN |       | 1600  |       |

**Fig. 1. CECT abdomen showing thrombosis of the right hepatic vein**
3. DISCUSSION

Budd-Chiari syndrome occurs due to the obstruction of hepatic venous out-flow which in-turn produces intense congestion of the liver. Smaller hepatic veins are often spared in budd-chiari syndrome. Polycythemia rubra vera, aspergillosis, filariasis, amoebic liver abscess, schistosomiasis, membranous obstruction of IVC, adrenal adenoma, Hepatocellular carcinoma, renal cell carcinoma, antiphospholipid syndrome, leiomyosarcoma of IVC, pregnancy, HRT, oral contraceptives are some of the causes of budd-chiari syndrome.

Clinically patients may have abdominal pain, abdominal distension, weakness, anorexia, jaundice, abdominal venous distension, massive ascites, hepatomegaly, splenomegaly and oedema of thighs, legs and feet. Antiphospholipid syndrome is an autoimmune disorder characterised by the formation of auto-antibodies against the phospholipids leading to the occurrence of multiple thrombotic events [3].

Another rheumatic, autoimmune and multi-systemic disorder is systemic lupus erythematosus characterised by the presence of auto-antibodies. The association of SLE with Antiphospholipid Syndrome (APS) is about 36% in reported cases [4].

The association of antiphospholipid antibody syndrome (APLA) and SLE with Budd-Chiari syndrome is very rare and only few cases have been reported in literature. Most of the cases reported till now had clinical manifestations of SLE before they were diagnosed with Budd-Chiari. Our patient presented with Budd-chiari which on further work up was found to have SLE Espinosa G et al.,[5] Jayabal et al., and Ilkgül O et al., also provided the data with the similar findings regarding the association of Budd-chiari syndrome as an early manifestation of SLE. Patient with secondary antiphospholipid syndrome should be kept on long term antiplatelet or anticoagulants therapy to maintain the target INR between 3 to 4 [6]. Side to side porto-caval shunting can be done if there is inadequate response to medical therapy and in case of shunt failure [7],[8]. Ortho topic liver transplantation can be considered. This is because of the thrombosis of the portal vein, splenic vein, and superior mesenteric vein which results in unshuntable portal hypertension.

4. CONCLUSION

Any patient presenting with features of Budd-chiari syndrome, should always be screened for Antiphospholipid syndrome as well as for SLE even in the absence of the other clinical features prior to anticoagulation therapy and steroids especially in young females[9]. Early screening and diagnosis will prevent the future complications like repeated miscarriages and other multi-systemic complications.

CONSENT AND ETHICAL APPROVAL

As per international standard or university standard guideline Patient’s consent and ethical approval has been collected and preserved by the authors.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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Peer-review history:
The peer review history for this paper can be accessed here:
https://www.sdiarticle4.com/review-history/76044