Abstract:
Aorto-mitral discontinuity is considered a relatively rare complication of infective endocarditis, usually requiring invasive surgical procedures, including double valve replacement in addition to aortic root replacement/repair. In the present case report, images were produced using transthoracic echocardiograms and transesophageal echocardiograms, which may assist in the planning of surgical procedures. The images captured using real-time three-dimensional transesophageal echocardiograms revealed aorto-mitral discontinuity and a perforated mitral valve aneurysm of the anterior leaflet.

Key words: infective endocarditis, transthoracic echocardiogram, transesophageal echocardiogram

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Introduction
Aorto-mitral discontinuity is a relatively rare critical complication associated with infective endocarditis (IE). We herein report a case with unusual aorto-mitral discontinuity caused by IE, which was identified using transthoracic echocardiograms (TTEs) as well as transesophageal echocardiograms (TEEs), including real-time three-dimensional transesophageal echocardiogram (RT3D TEE). Through this approach, we detected aorto-mitral discontinuity associated with anterior mitral valve aneurysm perforation.

Case Report
A 75-year-old man complicated with edema of the lower limbs was admitted to his previous doctor. He had no apparent medical history, including hypertension and diabetes, nor any predisposing valvular heart diseases. TTEs showed aortic regurgitation (AR) and mitral regurgitation (MR) with a massive structure, and the left ventricular dimension at the diastolic phase was determined to be 57 mm, with the ejection fraction preserved at the time (estimated at 66% by the Teichholz method). At that point, no perforation was observed, including for the mitral valve, and his aorto-mitral continuity was preserved.

The laboratory data revealed an elevated level of C-reactive protein (CRP) at 6.1 mg/dL, and Streptococcus species were detected in the patient’s blood culture. A diagnosis of IE with heart failure was made, and the patient received antibiotic therapy (penicillin) for six weeks. His serum CRP level decreased to within the normal range (0.2 mg/dL), and his blood culture became negatively associated with antibiotic therapy. However, his dyspnea on effort worsened gradually, despite medical treatment, and he was referred to Kanazawa University Hospital based on a surgical indication for MR and AR. At that time, he was conscious and alert with a body temperature of 36.8°C, heart rate of 74 beats/min, blood pressure of 113/50 mmHg, and percutaneous oxygen saturation of 97% on room air. Pansystolic heart murmur at his apex (Levine III/VI) as well as diastolic heart murmur at the third left sternal border (Levine III/VI) and mild edematous changes were observed at his lower limbs, although no apparent coarse crackles were audible in the bilateral lung fields.

Chest X-ray showed cardiomegaly and pulmonary congestion despite medical treatments using torasemide (4 mg) and tolvaptan (7.5 mg) (Fig. 1A). TTEs examined at our institute...
with a parasternal long-axis and short-axis view showed aorto-mitral discontinuity and protrusion to the left atrium (Fig. 1B and C). In addition, a TTE with an apical long-axis view revealed aneurysmal changes of aorto-mitral discontinuity associated with severe MR (Fig. 1D). The left ventricular dimension at the diastolic phase was unchanged from the initial evaluation (59 mm), and the ejection fraction was still preserved (estimated at 65% by the Teichholz method). A TEE with a 135° view showed that the fibrous structures had been transected, and the front of the left atrium was protruding inwards, resulting in the appearance of the low-echoic space (Fig. 2A). Severe AR flow had affected part of the aorto-mitral continuity, causing the aneurysmal change and perforation of the anterior mitral valve (Fig. 2B). An RT3D TEE showed anterior mitral valve aneurysm and perforation as well as an area of aorto-mitral discontinuity connecting with the left ventricle (Fig. 3).

The patient successfully underwent aortic valve replacement with a 19-mm Carpentier-Edwards PERIMOUNT Magna EASE aortic heart valve (Carpentier-Edwards, Irvine, USA), and mitral valve replacement with a 25-mm St. Jude Medical Epic valve (St. Jude Medical, St. Paul, USA) associated with anterior mitral commissure (AMC) plasty. Intraoperative findings revealed aorto-mitral discontinuity (Fig. 4A) and a perforated mitral valve aneurysm of the anterior leaflet (Fig. 4B). The histology of all valves indicated myxoid degeneration. In addition, aneurysmal change with a perforation was observed at the middle part of the anterior mitral leaflet, caused by IE (Fig. 4C). The micropathological findings of the excised aortic and mitral valve revealed infiltrations of lymphocytes, plasma cells, histiocytes, and a small amount of eosinophils, findings that were compatible with changes caused by IE, although no bacterial bodies were detected.

The clinical course subsequent to the surgical procedure was good, and the patient was discharged 26 days after surgery. The patient was followed without complications at our outpatient department.
of patients with IE did not have any predisposing cardiac diseases (1). In addition, our patient was treated appropriately according to the current Japanese guideline [Guidelines for Prevention and Treatment of Infective Endocarditis (JCS 2017)]. It is therefore unclear why the infection in the present case grew so severe. We would like to emphasize that even individuals without predisposing cardiac diseases can be complicated with severe valvular heart disease associated with IE.

The prevalence of aorto-mitral discontinuity has been shown to be as high as 10.6% among cases of left-sided diseases (1). A substantial proportion of patients with IE did not have any predisposing cardiac diseases (1). In addition, our patient was treated appropriately according to the current Japanese guideline [Guidelines for Prevention and Treatment of Infective Endocarditis (JCS 2017)]. It is therefore unclear why the infection in the present case grew so severe. We would like to emphasize that even individuals without predisposing cardiac diseases can be complicated with severe valvular heart disease associated with IE.

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Discussion

In the case described here, severe AR flow affected part of aorto-mitral junction, leading to aorto-mitral discontinuity and aneurysmal change of the anterior mitral valve. It is of note that he had no apparent medical history, including hypertension and diabetes, nor any valvular heart diseases. In this regard, it has been shown that a substantial proportion of patients with IE did not have any predisposing cardiac
IE (2), and in left-sided double-valve IE, aorto-mitral discontinuity reconstruction is required in 28% of cases (3). Surgical treatment should always be considered in cases of IE, as more than half of patients with IE have been surgically treated (4), although the extent and complexity of the surgical procedure have been shown to be associated with a poor prognosis, with an early mortality rate ranging between 10% and 32% (5, 6). It is important to be aware of cases complicated with aorto-mitral discontinuity that require additional surgical procedures among patients with IE, particularly those with left-sided double-valve IE.

The authors state that they have no Conflict of Interest (COI).

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