Endoscopic closure of a 6-cm long esophageal defect with tracheoesophageal fistula

A 68-year-old man with metastatic esophageal adenocarcinoma previously treated with esophagectomy and chemoradiation presented with new-onset dysphagia and cough. A recent good response to chemotherapy resulted in shrinkage of a 7-cm mediastinal metastasis. Chest computed tomography revealed a large esophageal defect. A barium swallow confirmed the presence of a tracheoesophageal fistula (TEF). Upper endoscopy showed a 6-cm defect on the anterior esophageal wall with a clear opening into the trachea (Fig. 1, Video 1).

An upper gastroscope was advanced to the esophagojejunostomy. A 0.035-inch guidewire was passed through the scope and coiled within the jejunum. The scope was withdrawn while maintaining the position of the wire and a double-channel endoscope was fitted with an endoscopic suturing device. The defect was closed using two running sutures, with an average of 5 bites per suture. Immediately after suturing, the patient’s capnography improved significantly. Subsequently, a 23 mm × 12 cm fully covered self-expandable metal stent was successfully placed, with the proximal flange positioned at 2 cm above the esophageal defect and just distal to the upper esophageal sphincter (Fig. 2). The esophageal stent was secured with two sutures (Fig. 3). A subsequent esophagram showed no extravasation of contrast (Fig. 4). The patient tolerated an oral diet and was discharged home in a good condition.

TEF is a rare yet life-threatening condition that develops in up to 5% of patients with esophageal malignancy [1]. Management is challenging, and closure often requires a multidisciplinary approach and is associated with high rates of recurrence [2]. Surgery is associated with extremely high morbidity, and endoscopic therapy has been proposed as a minimally invasive and relatively safe modality that improves the quality of life in patients with TEF [3, 4]. The current case demonstrates that very large esophageal defects and fistulae can be successfully closed using a multi-modality approach of endoscopic suturing and stent placement.
The authors

Danny Issa, Qais Dawod, Marwan Azzam, Kartik Sampath, David Carr-Locke, Reem Z. Sharaiha
Division of Gastroenterology and Hepatology, New York Presbyterian Hospital/Weill Cornell Medical Center, New York, New York, United States

Corresponding author

Reem Z. Sharaiha, MD
Division of Gastroenterology and Hepatology Department of Medicine, Weill Cornell Medicine, 1305 York Avenue, 4th Floor, New York, New York 10021, United States
Fax: +1-646-962-0110
rzs9001@med.cornell.edu

References


Competing interests

Dr. Sharaiha is a consultant for Boston Scientific, Olympus, Apollo, and Medtronic. Dr. Carr-Locke is a consultant for Steris, Telemed, Boston Scientific, Valenxt, Ergogrip, and Screwire.

Fig. 3 The proximal flange of the stent was sutured to the esophageal wall to prevent stent migration.

Fig. 4 Barium swallow test showing no extravasation of contrast confirming complete closure.

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