Esophageal cancer is often diagnosed at an advanced stage, without curative options in 50%–60% of cases. Of the major complications, the principal ones are luminal obstruction and esophagorespiratory fistulas [1]. Among palliative measures, self-expanding metal stents (SEMS) have provided good quality of life for patients and are cost-effective [2]. Despite these advantages, the use of SEMS is not free of complications, namely incomplete expansion, migration, perforation, hemorrhage, tracheal compression, or food impaction [1].

Recently some authors have demonstrated accurate and safe stenting using only endoscopic guidance, without fluoroscopic support [3,4]. The Ultraflex stent has been associated with more occurrences of incomplete expansion and migration as well as infolding after deployment, as its construction favors a smaller radial force: thus, whilst preventing the risk of major trauma, it occasionally requires balloon dilation [5].

We report an unusual event after insertion of a covered 12-cm Ultraflex SEMS under sedation and without fluoroscopic control. The patient was a 52-year-old man with inoperable lower third esophageal cancer, who had previously undergone chemotherapy and radiotherapy and currently had grade 3 dysphagia (Fig. 1).

After deployment the stent adopted a bizarre “B type” infolded conformation with maintenance of double lumen patency (Fig. 2 and 3), whilst successfully covering the fistula holes. After 24 hours, repeat endoscopy revealed the same findings. Balloon dilation was done unsuccessfully. Biopsy rat-tooth forceps were used to displace the stent, which allowed it to unfold but uncovered the fistula opening (Fig. 4). A second attempt, using the same instrument, correctly positioned the prosthesis (Fig. 5 and 6).

The patient remained asymptomatic for the following 6 months and required no further endoscopic examinations. This report highlights a possible and previously unconsidered adverse event, and is a reminder of the importance of improvisation and of the necessity for improvements in stent design.
B. Arroja, C. Gonçalves, F. Silva, I. Cotrim, H. Vasconcelos
Department of Gastroenterology, Hospital de Santo André EPE, Leiria, Portugal

References

Fig. 6  Esophagographic confirmation of correct opening of the stent.