Modified single-balloon endoscopy for ERCP in a patient with Billroth II gastrectomy

An 84-year-old man with a history of hepatocellular carcinoma treated by transcatheter arterial chemoembolization and percutaneous ethanol injection therapy 2 years previously was admitted with jaundice. Magnetic resonance cholangiopancreatography (MRCP) showed a tumor invading the bifurcation of the common bile duct with bilateral intrahepatic duct dilatation (Fig. 1). An adequate aperture was made in the overtube at a point 75 cm from its tip on the side opposite to the pressure line. A conventional forward-viewing upper gastrointestinal endoscope with this modified single balloon was used to perform ERCP by the standard single-balloon method (Fig. 2). The papilla was found via the afferent loop and a plastic stent was successfully placed with no complications (Fig. 3 and Fig. 4).

It is usually difficult to perform ERCP in postoperative patients because of their altered anatomy. Balloon-assisted enteroscopy, with either a double or single balloon, can be used for these patients [1,2]. Although single-balloon enteroscopy-assisted ERCP is an accepted method, some endoscopists believe that “short-type” double-balloon enteroscopy is more effective in such patients [3]. In one multicenter experience of overtube-assisted enteroscopic ERCP in patients with surgically altered pancreatobiliary anatomy, the overall success rates were 60% and 63% in single-balloon and double-balloon procedures respectively. There was no significant difference between ERCPs performed by single-balloon or double-balloon enteroscopy [4].

There are many published case reports using double-balloon enteroscopy for ERCP in patients with altered anatomy, but reports of single-balloon enteroscopy-assisted ERCPs are rare [1,5,6]. One reason for this is that double-balloon enteroscopy was developed before single-balloon enteroscopy. The other reason is that “short” double-balloon enteroscopy is easy to use for ERCP in patients with altered anatomy. Single-balloon enteroscopy has a 200-cm working length and the accessories are very limited [7].

Itoi et al. developed one possible method for single-balloon enteroscopy-assisted ERCP [1]. They performed traditional single-balloon enteroscopy first; they then made an aperture in the overtube at a point 100 cm from its tip. A conventional forward-viewing upper gastrointestinal endoscope was then substituted for the
enteroscope before the ERCP. Their overall success rate for therapeutic ERCP was 76.9%; however, this is a complicated method.

Here, we report an easier method that we have developed for ERCP in patients with altered anatomy. We make an aperture in the overtube at a point 75 cm from its tip, which enables us to complete the balloon-assisted ERCP with a conventional forward-viewing upper gastrointestinal endoscope—the enteroscopy is unnecessary in our method. The one limitation to our method is that it is not suitable for patients with a Roux-en-Y anastomosis because the loop from the anastomosis to the papilla is longer in this situation than after other types of surgery.

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Competing interests: None

Fig. 4 Radiographic image during the modified single-balloon enteroscopy-assisted endoscopic retrograde cholangiopancreatography (ERCP) showing the correctly positioned plastic stent.

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Corresponding author
Horng-Yuan Wang, MD
Division of Gastroenterology
Department of Internal Medicine
Mackay Memorial Hospital
No. 92, Sec. 2, Chung-Shan N. Road
Taipei
Taiwan
Fax: +886-2-25433642
mmhgmian@gmail.com