Virtual gastroscopy for the evaluation of stomach malignancy

A 50-year-old woman presented with an 18-month history of nonprogressive dysphagia, early satiety, weight loss, and an aversion to greasy food. Physical examination revealed an old 20-cm scar on her right thorax following treatment for breast carcinoma, for which she had undergone radical mastectomy and chemotherapy 7 years previously. Conventional endoscopy (EG-2990Zi, 11.4-mm diameter; Pentax, Tokyo, Japan) failed because of the narrowness of the esophagus. Subsequent double-contrast total gastrointestinal examination confirmed the narrowing of the esophagus between the level of the aortic arch and the cardia with a smooth internal surface (Fig. 1), as well as stomach stiffness. An ultrasmall endoscope (EG-1540; Pentax) passed snugly through the narrowed area allowing a deep biopsy to be taken from the gastric body. Immunostaining of the biopsy gave the following results: estrogen receptor (ER)+; progesterone receptor (PR)+; carcino antigen (CA) 15–3+; cytokeratin (CK) 20−; and focal gross cystic disease fluid protein (GCDFP)+/−, consistent with metastatic linitis plastica from a primary breast carcinoma.

A subsequent computed tomography (CT) scan revealed a thickened stomach wall. No gas-producing powder was given prior to virtual gastroendoscopy. No ulcer or mass was detected in the stomach, and the gastric folds at the greater curvature were coarse but remained largely intact (Fig. 2). This was a result of uneven stiffness caused by the malignant infiltration of the gastric wall. CT-based virtual gastroendoscopy has been considered as an alternative approach to examination of the upper gastrointestinal tract where there are substantial risks or difficulties with conventional endoscopy [1, 2]. However, this application has seldom been reported, and none of the previous reports have demonstrated linitis plastica on virtual gastroendoscopy. Here we have presented two patients who underwent virtual gastroendoscopy evaluation, one because of the narrowness of the esophagus and the other because of a stricture within the stomach. Preparing patients with gas-producing powder is necessary to reveal the characteristic “ugly stomach” of linitis plastica. More studies on virtual gastroendoscopy are warranted to further elucidate its value in patients where conventional endomicroscopy is difficult.
Competing interests: None

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Bibliography
© Georg Thieme Verlag KG
Stuttgart · New York
ISSN 0013-726X

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