

“Chinese weevils” (*Ulomoides dermestoides*) found incidentally during colonoscopy

A 70-year-old man underwent screening colonoscopy which revealed a nonspecific colitis characterized by several areas of “patchy” erythema (▶ Fig. 1), congestion, and subepithelial hemorrhage of the mucosa of the left colon. Surprisingly, many dead insects resembling small cockroaches were seen (▶ Fig. 2). These insects corresponded to the species *Ulomoides dermestoides*, colloquially known as “Chinese weevils.” They were present in larval and adult stages, and some adult insects were undigested and appeared to be “alive” (▶ Fig. 3). After the procedure, the patient informed us that he had consumed these bugs as part of an alternative therapy known as “coleotherapy,” which consists of the consumption of live Chinese weevils over a period of 140 days. This alternative therapy is purportedly useful in combating diseases such as “any type” cancer, asthma, psoriasis, diabetes, vitiligo, chronic skin diseases, arthritis, Parkinson’s disease, and depression. In a review of the subject, the word “coleotherapy” provided no results in PubMed; however there were recent publications that reported a cytotoxic effect and DNA damage to cellular components of epithelial cell line A549 human lung carcinoma by these insects, and decreased total leukocytes, polymorphonuclear leukocytes, and total proteins in an animal model for pleural damage with carrageenan after applying an “aqueous substrate” of these insects [1,2].

At the present time, there is no firm scientific evidence to justify the use of this alternative therapy. We suspect that the mucosal colonic inflammation was the result of the presence of the dead insects.

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Competing interests: None

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Bibliography

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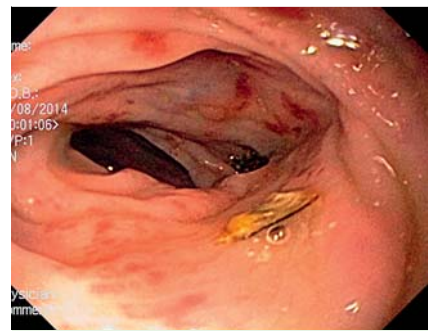


Fig. 1 Colonoscopy in a 70-year-old man showing a nonspecific colitis characterized by several areas of “patchy” erythema.

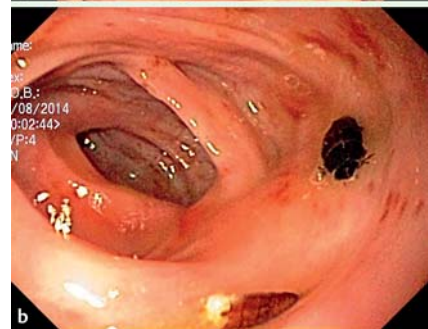


Fig. 2 a, b Dead insects resembling small cockroaches.

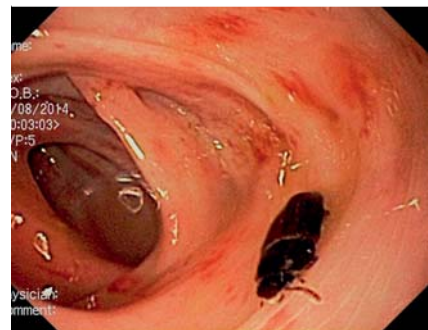


Fig. 3 Some adult insects were undigested and appeared to be “alive.”