Biliopleural Fistula as a Late Complication of Percutaneous Transhepatic Cholangioscopy

A 48-year-old patient had been admitted on several occasions because of choledocholithiasis complicated by cholangitis. In February 1997, PTC was performed to remove an impacted stone in the right hepatic duct. At 3 months later, he was readmitted because of jaundice, fever, dyspnea, and right scapular pain. Chest radiography demonstrated a right pleural effusion. A drainage tube was inserted into the right pleural space, and yielded 700 ml of a bile-stained fluid. Blood and pleural cultures grew *Escherichia coli*. Endoscopic retrograde cholangiopancreatography (ERCP) showed bile duct stones; most of them were removed endoscopically. Opacification of the intrahepatic ducts showed a fistula between the right hepatic duct and the right pleural cavity (Figure 1). A nasobiliary catheter was inserted into the right hepatic duct. At a repeat ERCP procedure, performed 5 days later, the fistula could no longer be visualized. The patient recovered uneventfully and was discharged 26 days after admission.

In this patient, a biliopleural communication was detected 3 months after PTC, during which complete clearance of the bile duct had been obtained. Common bile stones, leading to recurrent biliary obstruction, were noticed again shortly after the procedure. Probably, the path created by the large drainage tubes served as an ideal passage through which bile could leak back into the pleural cavity in the presence of persistent biliary tract obstruction. Moreover, suppurrative complications in the bile ducts and in the liver may have contributed to the development of the biliopleural fistula. The early institution of another means of effective biliary drainage, either by endoscopic or percutaneous biliary drainage, is the most important factor in the successful management of this complication [2, 5].

**Figure 1** Notice the presence of a fistulous tract (arrowheads) between the right hepatic duct and the right pleural space.

**References**


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