Hepatic encephalopathy is a complication that occurs when a large proportion of the mesenteric venous blood is shunted into the systemic circulation [1]. Spontaneous splenorenal or gastrorenal shunts may develop as portocaval circulation collaterals in patients with portal hypertension. Occlusion of spontaneous portal-systemic shunts by surgical or interventional radiological techniques is an effective treatment for intractable encephalopathy [2, 3]. Selective embolization of the splenic vein was performed recently for untreatable portal-systemic encephalopathy, with the application of metallic coils between a spontaneous splenorenal shunt and the superior mesenteric vein [4]. Ethylene vinyl alcohol (Enteryx) has been used for the embolization of vascular malformations [5]. In this study, we determined the feasibility of performing endoscopic ultrasound-guided splenic vein embolization (EUS-SVE) using Enteryx (Figure 1).

In a Yorkshire breed of pig, the splenic vein was identified by linear EUS (FG-36 UA; Pentax Precision Instruments Corp., Orangeburg, New York, USA), and a 22-gauge fine-needle aspiration needle (Echo-3-22; Wilson-Cook, Winston-Salem, North Carolina, USA) was introduced into the splenic vein from the stomach. Under EUS guidance, 4 ml of Enteryx was injected into the lumen of the splenic vein. The pressure in the splenic vein was measured before and after the injection. The animal was monitored for 7 days after the procedure and an upper abdominal contrast computed tomographic scan was performed on day 4.

The splenic vein pressure increased from a mean of 0 mm Hg to a mean of 5 mm Hg after EUS-SVE. Computed tomography on day 4 showed the Enteryx in the lumen of the splenic vein (Figure 2). Serum values of lipase, amylase, aspartate aminotransferase, alanine aminotransferase, creatinine, and blood urea nitrogen were all within normal limits. When the animal was sacrificed, a solid thrombus, 10 mm × 5 mm in size, was visible inside the splenic vein (Figure 3), and this was confirmed by histology (Figure 4).

EUS-SVE using Enteryx appears to be a feasible method for embolizing the splenic vein, and was well tolerated during a 1-week observational period. This technique could be considered as an alternative to direct shunt occlusion by surgery or interventional radiology.

Endoscopy_UCTN_Code_TTT_1AS_2AC

DOI: 10.1055/s-2006-944725
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