Endovascular treatment of iatrogenic arteriovenous fistula of the iliac vessel

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Abstract

Background. Iatrogenic vascular injuries, due to the particular nature of such pathology, are associated with high morbidity and mortality in the postoperative period.

Objectives. The objective of this study was to present a case of non-classic approach to the therapy of iatrogenic arteriovenous fistula.

Material and methods. We present a case of a 17-year-old female patient admitted to the Department of Vascular, General and Oncologic Surgery (Copernicus Memorial Hospital, Łódź, Poland) due to an iatrogenic injury to the common iliac vein and artery, following neurosurgical intervention on the spine. Two weeks prior to admission, the patient underwent surgery in the Neurosurgery Clinic for herniated nucleus pulposus and lumbar spine scoliosis. The imaging diagnostic revealed the presence of a pseudoaneurysm of the right common iliac artery and arteriovenous fistula between the right common iliac vessels. The patient was qualified for endovascular treatment. Two self-expanding covered stents were successfully deployed. The clinical and radiological outcome of the procedure was good. The postoperative period was uneventful. The patient was discharged home on the 3rd postoperative day.

Results. The control examinations (directly after the procedure and 6, 12, 24, and 32 months thereafter) revealed full patency of the iliac vessels, as well as no recurrence of arteriovenous fistula, nor a pseudoaneurysm of the right common iliac artery. No symptoms of either chronic limb ischaemia or venous insufficiency were observed.

Conclusions. Iatrogenic vessel injury, being a complication of neurosurgical and orthopedic surgeries, may be overlooked and remain undetected both in intra- and postoperative period. Modern imaging techniques allow for an adequate diagnosis of the injury and planning the treatment of arteriovenous fistula. The endovascular procedures are the method of choice in patients with arteriovenous fistulas of iliac vessels, alternative to open surgery.

Key words: iatrogenic vessel injury, arteriovenous fistula, pseudoaneurysm of the common iliac artery, endovascular treatment
Introduction

Iatrogenic vascular injuries, due to the particular nature of such pathology, are associated with high morbidity and mortality in the postoperative period.1,2 This dangerous and sometimes life-threatening complication is being increasingly reported in the literature. It results mainly from the large number of diagnostic and therapeutic interventions requiring vascular access, as well as complex and extensive surgical repair procedures. The most dangerous early and late consequences of iatrogenic vessel injuries include intra- and postoperative hemorrhages from the large arteries and veins.3 The group of early complications consists of a pulsating hematoma, arterial and venous thrombosis, acute ischaemia of tissues and organs, whereas late complications include chronic ischaemia, post-thrombotic syndrome, pulmonary embolism, pseudoaneurysm formation and arteriovenous fistulas.1 Due to their local and systemic consequences, vascular fistulas pose a significant diagnostic and therapeutic issue. The size and localization of the fistula determine the clinical image, with typical vascular murmur, steal symptoms below the level of the fistula and venous overload leading to right ventricular failure.4−6 Early identification of the fistula and its successful treatment would allow us to avoid significant consequences for the patient’s health. Constant development and the use of endovascular methods present a valuable opportunity for treating vascular injuries and mitigating their consequences, including arteriovenous fistulas.4,7,10 Vascular injury may complicate the course of other procedures and their serious consequences during specialist training of prospective surgeons.8 The early and proper diagnosis, as well as correct therapy, increases the patient’s chances of surviving vascular injury and avoiding complications.

Case report

A 17-years old female patient (OHX) of Asian origin was referred to the Department of Vascular, General and Oncologic Surgery (Copernicus Memorial Hospital, Łódź, Poland) due to suspected arteriovenous fistula of the iliac vessels. Two weeks prior to admission, she was underwent surgery in the Neurosurgery Clinic for herniated nucleus pulposus and lumbar spine scoliosis. The discharge summary revealed that hemilaminectomy of L4, removal of L4/L5 discus, invetrtebral stabilization using Capstone Medtronic and posterior L4/L5 stabilization using Legacy Medtronic were performed (Medtronic, Memphis, USA). The patient was discharged home on the 5th postoperative day. The follow-up visits in the Neurosurgery Clinic (7 days after discharge) and Outpatient Clinic for Neurosurgery (in 6 weeks) were recommended, as well as permanent rehabilitation and physiotherapy. The patient reported unspecified pain in the right iliac area during her 1st hospital stay, which was reported to the attending physician. During her follow-up visit in the Neurosurgery Clinic 7 days after being discharged, she reported the feeling of “ringing” within the abdominal cavity. The attending neurosurgeon ordered a next visit in the Outpatient Clinic for Neurosurgery in 2 weeks and referred her for ultrasound examination of the iliac and femoral vessels. The next day, the patient, accompanied by her mother, reported to the Outpatient Clinic for Vascular Surgery. The physical examination revealed good general condition in a circulatory and respiratory stable patient. Her heart rate was normal with 74 bpm, heart tones loud and clear, and blood pressure was 115/75 mm Hg. The abdominal palpation and auscultation revealed increased muscle tonus in the right iliac area over the pathological mass showing slight machinery murmur. The pulse over the arteries of the lower extremities was normal and symmetric. There was no edema of the lower extremities. The Doppler ultrasound revealed the hypoechoegenic mass over right the iliac vessels with turbulent, high-amplitude flow (color and spectral Doppler). The accelerated, high-amplitude, machinery flow, typical for arteriovenous fistula was observed in the right iliac vein. The patient was urgently referred to the Department of Vascular, General and Oncologic Surgery (Copernicus Memorial Hospital, Łódź, Poland). The laboratory findings performed on admission revealed anemia (RBC: 2.51 T/L, Hb: 7.4 g/dL, Ht: 24.1%, MCV: 96.0 fL, MCH: 29.5 pg, MCHC: 3.7 g/dL), leukocytosis (WBC: 13.51 G/L) and thrombocytosis (PLT: 508 G/L). The abdominal angio-MRI showed the presence of pseudoaneurysm of the right common iliac artery (Fig. 1). The patient was qualified for an iliac vessels angiography the next day, which confirmed the presence of large aneurysm of the right common iliac artery and arteriovenous fistula between right common iliac vessels (Fig. 2). The decision was made to treat the patient using endovascular method. The right femoral artery was punctured and self-expanding nitinol coated Fluency® 9 × 40 mm stent was implanted (Bard Incorporated, Karlruhe, Germany). Due to the observed leak to the aneurysm sack, the second Fluency® stent (10 × 40 mm) was introduced. The control angiography revealed neither leak into...
the aneurysm nor an arteriovenous fistula between the right common iliac artery and vein. A good flow through the right common, internal and external iliac arteries were observed (Fig. 3). Due to the identified anemia the patient received 2 units of group-matched red blood cell concentrate, which led to the normalization of morphotic parameters. In the postoperative period, the patient complained of slight pain in the right iliac region, which subsided after the administration of analgesics. The pulse over lower extremities arteries was normal and symmetric. The skin was normally colored and warm, with no edema. The postoperative period was uneventful. Once the compression dressing was removed the patient was mobilized and discharged in good general condition on the 3rd postoperative day.

**Results**

Prior being discharged, the patient had the Doppler ultrasound of iliac vessels performed, which revealed the patency of implanted stents and normal flow through iliac veins and arteries. Neither a pseudoaneurysm nor an arteriovenous fistula were revealed. Both veins and arteries of the right lower extremity were patent and showed normal flow. The patient was followed up in the out-patient clinic for vascular surgery. The control examinations revealed neither ischaemia of the extremity nor impaired patency of the stents (after 6, 12, 24 and 32 months; Fig. 4−6). No recurrence of arteriovenous fistula was observed. The patient is well and remains active.
Iatrogenic injury of the large pelvic vessels is one of the complications of neurosurgical and orthopedic surgeries. It is responsible for 0.05–0.3% of all complications occurring in such patients. The associated morbidity and mortality results from large vessels hemorrhage leading to hypovolemic shock. If undetected in the course of the primary operation, this may lead to the patient’s death during or after the surgery. The possibility to overlook vessel injury in the perioperative period results from its frequent faint clinical manifestation and the lack of knowledge concerning the possible consequences of performed surgeries showed by the physicians. It is not uncommon that they become detected incidentally, many years after the injury. Due to the associated early and late complications, each such complication requires urgent diagnostic and adequate, specialist treatment.

The diagnostic methods allow us to diagnose the patient with iatrogenic vessel injury include Doppler ultrasound, CT-angiography, MRI-angiography or angiography. Modern imaging techniques allow for the adequate diagnosis of the injury and planning of the treatment of arteriovenous fistula. The endovascular procedures are the method of choice in patients with arteriovenous fistula of iliac vessels, alternative to open surgery.

**References**


