

An unusual cause of desquamative esophageal lesions

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Dear Editor,

A 61-year-old man underwent a health check-up. He had no symptoms, and physical examination was normal. However, esophagogastroduodenoscopy showed longitudinal sloughing mucosal casts in the distal esophagus (i.e., desquamative esophageal lesions) (**Figure 1**). This characteristic endoscopic finding was consistent with pill esophagitis. Three years before presentation, treatment with clopidogrel was initiated to prevent recurrent cerebral infarction. Fluvastatin and esomeprazole had also been prescribed. Statin is frequently associated with muscle symptoms and diabetes mellitus; esophagitis has not been reported as a common side effect [1]. Clopidogrel can cause pill esophagitis [2]. Thus, a diagnosis of clopidogrel-induced esophagitis was made.

The notable finding of the present case is esomeprazole-resistant esophagitis. Antiplatelet drugs, including clopidogrel and low-dose aspirin (LDA), are a risk factor for esophageal mucosal injury [3]. Furthermore, acid-inhibitory drugs effectively prevent esophageal injury induced by LDA, but not by clopidogrel [3].

Pill esophagitis has been reported with bisphosphonates, dabigatran, doxycycline, anti-inflammatory drugs, and potassium chloride [2,4]. The main cause is pill(s) lodging in the esophagus [2]. Risk factors include difficulty ingesting pills, recumbent position and inadequate amounts of fluid [2]. In this case, no dysphagia was seen. On questioning, the patient stated that he had had a habit of low fluid intake. Esophagitis was cured only by adequate fluid intake when medication.

Clopidogrel is indicated for prevention of atherothrombotic events (e.g., myocardial infarction, ischemic stroke, peripheral arterial disease). Although pill esophagitis is usually self-limited, it can lead to hemorrhage, stricture, and perforation [2]. For prevention of pill esophagitis, it is important to confirm the absence of esophageal motility abnormalities and stricture before prescribing a drug. In addition, instructions on how to take medication is necessary.

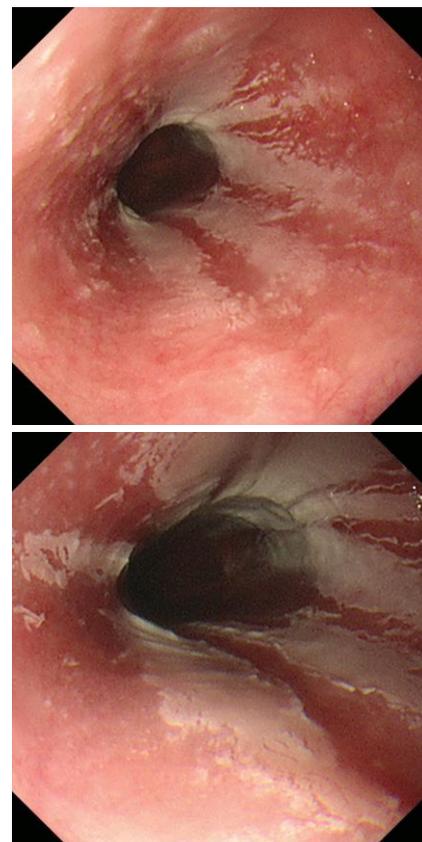


Figure 1. Esophagogastroduodenoscopy showing longitudinal sloughing mucosal casts in the distal esophagus (i.e., desquamative esophageal lesions) (reprinted with permission of the patient).

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