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CONTENTS

<i>С. Веселинов, А. Ковачева, И. Димитров.</i> Reinhold	-	3
<i>В. Димитрова, А. Антимова, Пл. Божинов.</i>		10
<i>Д. Харитонов.</i> MIS	3D	17
<i>. Бечева-Крайчир, П. Ангелова-Христова, Т. Василев.</i>	-	26
<i>М. Христов, Д. Якова-Христова, В. Христов.</i> " " -	-	43

CASE REPORTS

<i>S. Veselinov, A. Kovacheva, I. Dimitrov.</i> Clinical case (variation of Reinhold syndrome and hemiplegia cruciata in a stroke patient.....	3
<i>V. Dimitrova, A. Antimova, P. Bozhinov.</i> Clinical case of meningeal carcinomatosis	10
<i>D. Haritonov.</i> First long-segment 3D navigated MIS spinal reconstruction for revision lumbar surgery in Bulgaria.....	17
<i>E. Betcheva-Krajcir, P. Angelova-Hristova, T. Vassilev.</i> Hereditary thoracic aortic disease – significance of disease identification	26
<i>M. Hristov, D. Yakova-Hristova, V. Hristov.</i> „The egg or the hen“ – tachycardiomyopathy or cardiomyopathy with tachycardia – a clinical case	43

REINHOLD

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CLINICAL CASE (VARIATION OF REINHOLD SYNDROME AND HEMIPLEGIA CRUCIATA IN A STROKE PATIENT)

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Abstract. We present a clinical case of a syndrome previously undescribed in the literature, which is a combination between the extremely rare Reinhold's hemimedullary syndrome and hemiplegia cruciata. Magnetic resonance imaging of the brain with contrast, laboratory studies, and Doppler sonography were performed. This case is intended to emphasize the importance of a detailed neurologic examination to identify lesions involving the posterior cerebral circulation, the conduct of imaging methods to verify the diagnosis and rapid initiation of therapy. Knowledge of the different syndromes in stroke is so necessary in clinical practice because of its challenging nature, considering the great variability in symptom presentation.

Key words: hemiplegia cruciata, Reinhold's syndrome, ischemic stroke

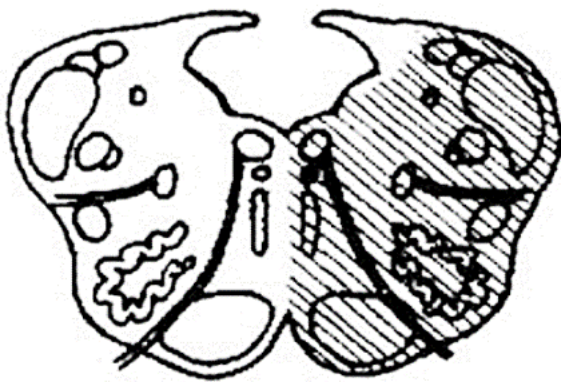
ВЪВЕДЕНИЕ

INTRODUCTION

- Brainstem syndromes, also known as alternating,
- arise as a result of lesions in the brainstem, most commonly caused by ischemic stroke. Each brainstem stroke syndrome has a characteristic clinical picture according to the involved area, however, generally, there is ipsilateral cranial nerve palsy and contralateral hemiplegia/hemiparesis and/or hemisensory loss [1, 2].

Reinhold, e
Heinrich Reinhold 1894
[3].

[4, 5] (. 1).



Hemimedullary syndrome, also known as Reinhold syndrome, was first described by the German physician Heinrich Reinhold in 1894 and is extremely rare [3]. It occurs as a result of the occlusion of the ipsilateral vertebral artery proximal to the posterior inferior cerebellar artery and its anterior spinal artery branches. This situation causes lateral medullary infarct and medial medullary infarct simultaneously [4, 5] (Figure 1).

. 1. (Kumar E., Chavalla K., IAIM, 2021; 8(3): 34-44)

Fig. 1. Area affected in hemimedullary syndrome (shaded) (Kumar E., Chavalla K., IAIM, 2021; 8(3): 34-44)

Reinhold

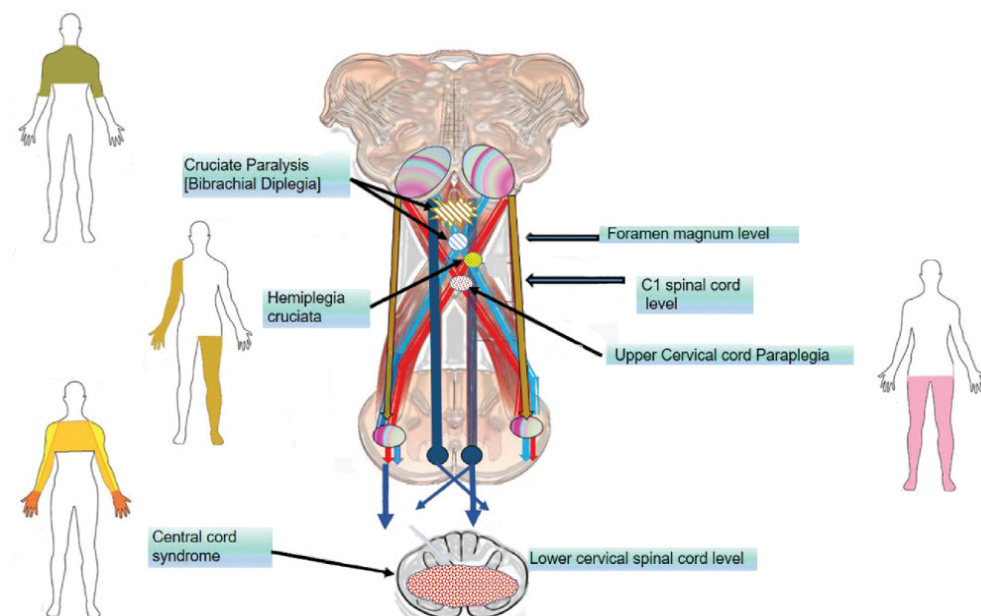
Clinically, classic Reinhold's syndrome is manifested by ipsilateral loss of facial pain and temperature sensation, Horner's syndrome, palatal, pharyngeal, and laryngeal paresis, tongue weakness, and cerebellar ataxia, combined with contralateral hemiparesis and hemihypesthesia. Like any other brainstem syndrome, different combinations of the described symptoms can be seen due to individual anatomical variations in the vertebrobasilar circulation. In the year 2005, a clinical case of Reinhold syndrome, backed up with imaging and functional studies with ipsilateral hemiparesis and hypoesthesia, as a result of dissection of the ipsilateral vertebral artery was described [6]. A literature review shows that only two clinical cases with adequate anatomical and imaging confirmation have been described [7].

Hemiplegia cruciata is well known in our, but controversial to the English literature. Lesions in the eponymous anatomical zone (more often traumatic, metabolic disorders or complications of surgical

cruciata) –
 [8] (. 2).
 45
 [9].
 73%
 , 26%
 [10].
 8% 20 46% [11].

interventions rather than strokes) represent a very rare pathology that manifests in cruciate hemiplegia – of the ipsilateral arm and of the contralateral leg [8] (Figure 2).

There are over 45 various etiological risk factors for the development of acute ischemic stroke. The endogenous ones are: atherosclerotic changes of the aorta, extra- and intracranial cerebral vessels, arterial hypertension, dyslipidemias, diabetes mellitus, congenital vascular anomalies, hematological diseases, vasculitis, genetic defects in coagulation factors, etc. Exogenous factors include: smoking, alcoholism, trauma, medications and narcotics [9]. The most common cause of strokes in particular are atherosclerosis, thromboembolism, lipohyalinosis, tumors, arterial dissection or trauma. In the medulla oblongata 73% of strokes result from vertebral artery stenosis, 26% from arterial dissection, with the remainder resulting from other causes such as cardioembolism [10]. The number of strokes resulting from cardioembolism increases proximally, 8% in the pons and 20 to 46% in the midbrain [11].



Maramattom B., Joseph S.,
 Journal of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh.
 2018;48(4):328-331

Fig. 2. Four different brainstem and spinal cord syndromes arising in the cervico-medullary segment and

their different anatomical localisations are presented. The lesion above, shaded in yellow, is the modern explanation of crossed hemiplegia (Maramattom B., Joseph S., Journal of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh. 2018;48(4):328-331)

ОПИСАНИЕ НА КЛИНИЧЕН СЛУЧАЙ

DESCRIPTION OF CLINICAL CASE

75-годишна жена, хоспитализирана в неврологична клиника с оплаквания за остър начал на тежко вращене, главоболие, затруднено гълтане и говорни нарушения, съчетани с слабост на десния горен и левия долен крайник. оплакванията възникват в контекста на хипертензивна криза с неизвестно време на началото. Пациентката има следните коморбидности – артериална хипертензия и анамнез за тиреоидектомия преди 5 години (на L-тироксин заместителна терапия). Няма доказателства за минало цереброваскуларно събитие.

При хоспитализацията пациентката е в лошо общо състояние, ориентирана само за себе си, дезориентирана във времето и мястото с вертикален нистагъм при поглеждане напред и надясно, ипсилатерален Хорнеров синдром, десностранна централна пареза на хипоглосалния нерв, централна пареза на десния горен и левия долен крайник – лека степен, дискоординативен синдром, ипсилатерална загуба на болна и температурна чувствителност на лицето и контралатерална на тялото.

Невропротективна, дехидратираща, гастропротективна, антиплателетна терапия, последвана от антикоагулантна терапия с нискомолекулярна хепарин, администрирана субкутанеозно – 48 часа от началото на хоспитализацията, е започната съгласно анамнеза и клиничните находки.

Извършените лабораторни изследвания разкриват: левкоцитоза с гранулоцитоза. Компютърна томография на мозъка и Доплер сонографията не разкриват доказателства за патология. Рентгенова снимка на белите дробове показва хиларна интерстициална едематоза. Поради очевидни клинични признаци за остър цереброваскуларен инцидент, е извършен МРТ – с доказателства за мозъчно стъблено исхемично събитие, включващо както мозъчния стъбел и мост (Фигура 3).

По време на хоспитализацията, влошаване на гълтаните нарушения е наблюдавано, налагайки поставянето на назогастрална сонда. В кон-

75-year-old female patient hospitalized in the Neurology Clinic for complaints of acute onset of severe vertigo, headache, swallowing and speech disorders, combined with weakness of the right upper and left lower extremity. The complaints occurred amidst a hypertensive crisis with an unknown time of onset. The patient has the following comorbidities – arterial hypertension and a history of thyroidectomy 5 years ago (on L-thyroxine replacement therapy). There is no evidence of a past cerebrovascular accident.

Upon hospitalization, the patient was in poor general condition, self-oriented, disoriented to time and place with vertical nystagmus when looking forward and to the right, ipsilateral Horner's syndrome, right-sided central paresis of the hypoglossal nerve, central paresis of the right upper and left lower extremity – mild degree, discoordination syndrome, ipsilateral loss of pain and temperature sensation of the face and contralateral to the body.

Neuroprotective, dehydrating, gastroprotective, antiplatelet followed by anticoagulant treatment with low molecular weight heparin administered subcutaneously – 48 hours from the onset of hospitalization was initiated according to the history and clinical findings.

The conducted laboratory tests revealed: leukocytosis with granulocytosis. Computed tomography of the brain and Doppler sonography showed no evidence of pathology. X-ray of the lung showed hilar interstitial edema. Due to obvious clinical signs of an acute cerebrovascular accident, an MRI was performed – with evidence of a brainstem ischemic stroke involving both the medulla oblongata and pons (Figure 3).

In the course of the hospitalization, a worsening of the swallowing disorders was observed, necessitating the placement of a nasogastric tube. In con-

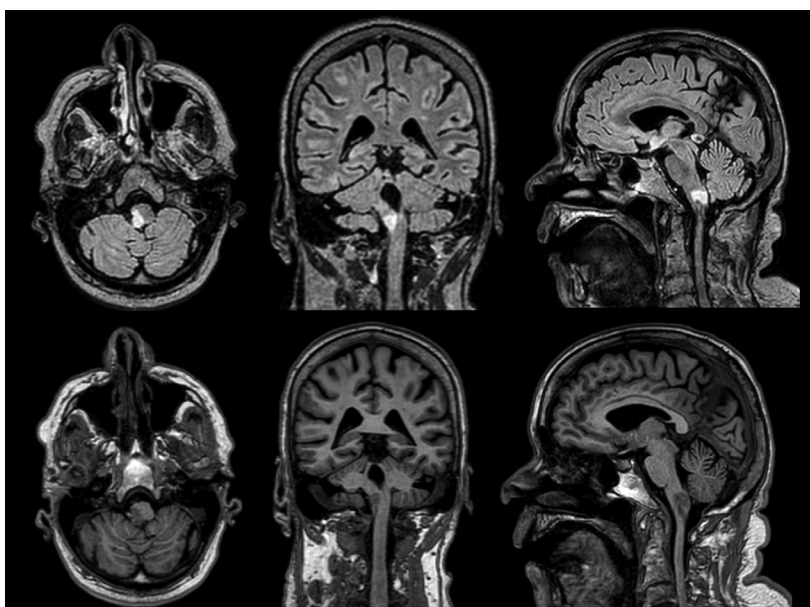


Fig. 3. MRI of the brain, axial, coronal, sagittal sections are presented. Infratentorially in the brainstem a high-signal at FLAIR (above) – lesion with axial size 13/9 mm, involving the medulla oblongata and pons. Same with hypointense signal pattern at T1 (bottom)

trast, the discoordination syndrome and limb paresis improved, and the patient was discharged on the seventh day with home therapy in stable condition, with a recommendation for further rehabilitation.

Two follow-up examinations were performed within 1 month after dehospitalization, revealing a significant improvement in the patient's general condition, complete reversal of motor deficits, discoordination syndrome, and bulbar paresis.

ОБСЪЖДАНЕ

Reinhold

hemiplegia cruciata

и [12].

DISCUSSION

We demonstrate a case of a 75-year-old female patient with symptoms of a syndrome previously undescribed in the literature, combining two extremely rare brainstem pathologies: Reinhold syndrome combined with ipsilateral arm and contralateral leg involvement. A similar cross-limb involvement occurs in hemiplegia cruciata. Although the syndrome was first identified in the beginning of the 20th century, hemiplegia cruciata's clinical significance has gradually been overlooked over the years [12].

Other causes of the syndrome may include traction or direct compression of the spine, tumors, hemorrhage, aberrant changes in cerebrospinal flu-

Wallenberg

IX, X, XI XII

[13].

III–XII

, locked-in

ЗАКЛЮЧЕНИЕ

CONCLUSION

This case is intended to emphasize the importance of a detailed neurologic examination to identify lesions involving the posterior cerebral circulation, the conduct of imaging methods to verify the diagnosis and rapid initiation of therapy. Early diagnosis is of utmost importance as brainstem infarction is associated with high mortality. Knowledge of the different syndromes of stroke is essential in practice, as the clinical presentation of the disease is challenging given the great variability in symptom presentation.

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МБАЛ „Сърце и мозък“ – Плевен

CLINICAL CASE OF MENINGEAL CARCINOMATOSIS**V. Dimitrova, A. Antimova, P. Bozhinov**

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Abstract. We present a brief literature review and clinical case of a female patient with complaints of bilateral facial paresis, bilateral hearing loss, vertigo, and inability to walk independently. CT cerebral angiography, electroneurography, laboratory tests, lumbar puncture, cerebrospinal fluid cytology were performed.

Key words: meningeal carcinomatosis, cerebrospinal fluid, neoplastic meningitis

ВЪВЕДЕНИЕ**INTRODUCTION**

Leptomeningeal metastases are also known as neoplastic meningitis and represent the spread of cancer cells into the cerebrospinal fluid, pia mater, and arachnoid from solid tumors or oncohematologic malignancies. In patients with systemic carcinoma, they are called carcinomatous meningitis or meningeal carcinomatosis. There are two types of leptomeningeal metastases: 1) diffuse or non-adhesive, representing free-floating tumor cells in the subarachnoid space, and 2) nodular metastases, characterized as tumor nodules contrast-enhancing their density.

Neoplastic meningitis is characterized by multifocal neurological signs and symptoms, and in addition to them, clinical diagnosis is also based on imaging and cytological examination of cerebrospinal fluid. Treatment depends on the type of leptomeningeal metastases, the presence or absence of parenchy-

mal brain metastases, and the systemic disease. Treatment options are intrathecal and systemic chemotherapy [1].

[1].

ЕТИОЛОГИЯ, ПАТОФИЗИОЛОГИЯ И КЛИНИЧНА КАРТИНА

ETIOLOGY, PATHOPHYSIOLOGY, CLINICAL FINDINGS

Meningeal carcinomatosis is the third most frequent neurological metastatic complication and is almost always an indicator of a terminal condition in cancer patients. It varies in different percentages for different types of tumors: 5% of cases with adenocarcinoma of the breast, 6% with lung, about 1% with gastrointestinal tract tumors and extremely rarely with ovarian cancer [4, 5]. It usually appears 3 months to 5 years after the diagnosis of the tumor, but it can also precede it. Pathogenetically, it is associated with hematogenous spread through Batson's plexus or the arterial system, adjacent invasion, migration of tumor cells through the periventricular or perivascular space, penetration along the course of the lymphatic vessels, or spread via the cerebrospinal fluid. A study in 2017 showed that tumor cells in the cerebrospinal fluid increase the production of C3 complement, which causes the blood-brain barrier to break down and plasma growth factors to enter and stimulate the cancer cells' growth. Invasion of the leptomeninges can lead to local inflammation and impaired resorption of cerebrospinal fluid, impeding cerebrospinal fluid flow and leading to hydrocephalus and/or increased intracranial pressure [6] (Fig. 1).

**Leptomeningeal metastatic cell supregulate complement component 3*

**Cancer cells from patients' cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) produced C3*

**C3a receptor activation allows entry of plasma growth factors into CSF*

**Interruption of C3a receptor signaling blocks leptomeningeal metastasis in mice*

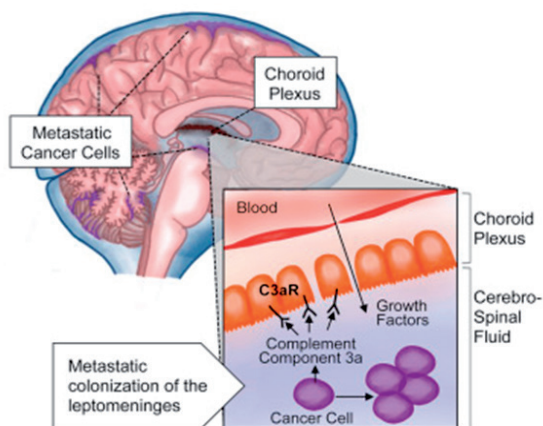


Fig. 1. Tumor cells in cerebrospinal fluid and their effect on C3 complement in mice

Клинически, повечето пациенти са с мултифокален дефицит, което често прави диагнозата трудна. Следващите симптоми и синдроми са разграничени:

- Енцефалопатия – нарушен психичен състояние (забърканост, промени в личността, намалена концентрация и памет, летаргия и загуба на съзнание)
- Краниални невропатии – диплопия, намалено зрение, промени в миризмата, вкус и слух, слабост на лицето, дисартрия, дисфагия, дисфония, и др.
- Радиклопатия – радикуларна болка в шията и гърба, парестезии, намалена чувствителност, слабост
- Повишено краниално налягане поради обструкция на CSF потока – главоболие, гадене, повръщане, промени в поведението и намалено съзнание
- Сходни със симптоми на инфаркт поради обструкция или компресия на церебрални съдове – фокален неврологичен дефицит (визуален, моторен, сензорен, координационни нарушения)
- Разстройства, свързани с мозъчни метастази: главоболие, новонастъпващи епилептични пристъпи и неврологични фокални знаци в зависимост от местоположението на тумора [1].

ОПИСАНИЕ НА КЛИНИЧЕН СЛУЧАЙ

58-годишна жена, хоспитализирана в неврологична клиника поради двустранна слабост на лицето и нарушен поход. Жалбите започнали няколко месеца преди това с въртене, двоен зрение и намален слух в лявото ухо, с последваща загуба на слух в дясното ухо. Тя била лекувана в неврологично отделение и диагностицирана с ишемичен инфаркт в вертебробазиларната система. След три месеца състоянието се влошило, което довело до тежки нарушения на координацията и двустранна загуба на слух; лечение било извършено в отоларингологична клиника. По-късно пациентката развела слабост на лявата страна на лицето, а два месеца по-късно и дясната страна на лицето била засегната с неспособност да задържа храна и течности. Главоболие, болка и изтръпване в долните крайници и тежка трудност при ходене се появили. Магнитен резонанс на мозъка бил извършен в амбулаторно отделение – с

Clinically, most patients present are with a multifocal deficit, which often makes the diagnosis difficult. The following symptoms and syndromes are distinguished:

- Encephalopathy – disturbed mental state (confusion, personality changes, impaired concentration and memory, lethargy and loss of consciousness)
- Cranial neuropathies – diplopia, impaired vision, changes in smell, taste and hearing, facial weakness, dysarthria, dysphagia, dysphonia, etc.
- Radiculopathy – radicular pain in the neck and back, paresthesias, reduced sensitivity, muscle weakness
- Increased cranial pressure due to CSF flow obstruction – headache, nausea, vomiting, behavioral changes and impaired consciousness
- Stroke-like symptoms due to obstruction or compression of cerebral vessels – focal neurological deficit (visual, motor, sensory, coordination disorders)
- Disorders associated with brain metastases: headache, new-onset epileptic seizures and neurological focal signs depending on tumor location [1].

DESCRIPTION OF A CLINICAL CASE

A 58-year-old female patient hospitalized in the Neurological Clinic due to bilateral weakness of the facial muscles and impaired gait. Complaints began several months ago with vertigo, double vision and reduced hearing in the left ear, with subsequent hearing loss in the right ear as well, she was treated in the neurological department and diagnosed with Ischemic Stroke in the vertebrobasilar vascular system. After three months, the patient's condition worsened, resulting in severe discoordination disturbances and bilateral hearing loss; inpatient treatment was carried out in an ENT clinic. Subsequently, the patient developed weakness on the left side of the face, and two months later the right side of the face was also affected with the inability to retain food and liquids. Headaches, pain and numbness in the lower limbs and severe difficulty in walking appeared. An MRI of the brain was performed in an outpatient setting – with

2020

m. rbicularis oculi

D-

(. 3).

(. 2).

120 mg

data of long-standing ischemia in the territory of the vertebrobasilar system.

The patient was diagnosed with low-differentiated adenocarcinoma of the left ovary since 2020, with infiltration of the left fallopian tube and dissemination lesions in regional, extra-regional lymph nodes and spleen. Hysterectomy and adnexectomy were performed, and 6 courses of chemotherapy were performed.

From the neurological status, it was established: Slightly pronounced neck stiffness, positive Kerning's symptom, left anacusis, right hypocusis, horizontal nystagmus when looking to the right, smoothed wrinkles on the forehead bilaterally, weakness of m. orbicularis oculi bilaterally, bilaterally smoothed nasolabial folds, impossible to show teeth, dyscoordination and quadripylramidal syndrome, severe dysarthria.

Abnormally elevated cholesterol, liver transaminases, and D-dimer were found on paraclinical tests. The rest of the indicators were within reference limits. From the CT scan – cerebral angiography – with data on a punctiform blood-equivalent zone in the right cerebellar hemisphere. An electroneurogram was performed – with evidence of a chronic demyelinating polyneuritis damage (Fig. 3). Lumbar puncture was performed and material was taken for laboratory, microbiological and cytological examination. Results show the presence of proteinorrhagia, pleocytosis, mainly at the expense of lymphocytes and low CSF glucose. Absence of bacterial growth on microbiological examination. From the cytological examination – data on tumor cells from poorly differentiated adenocarcinoma (resembling the cells shown in Fig. 2).

The differential diagnosis includes brain metastases, meningitis (bacterial, viral, or fungal infections), encephalopathies (toxic or metabolic), spinal metastases (epidural or extramedullar), paraneoplastin syndromes, and sarcoidosis.

Treatment with Mannitol, corticosteroids 120 mg/day, antibiotic treatment with III generation cephalo-

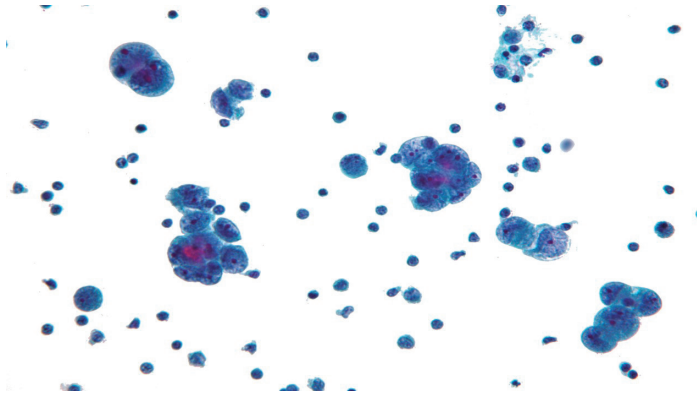


Fig. 2. Tumor cells from poorly differentiated adenocarcinoma

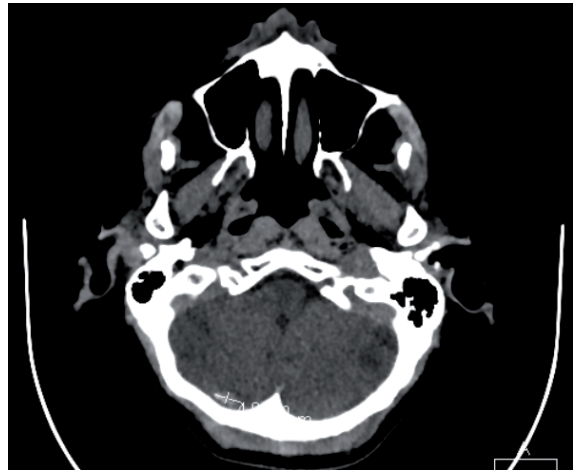


Fig. 3. Blood Equivalent zone in right cerebellar hemisphere

III 4 g
8 mg 10 mg

sporins 4 g/day, water-salt solutions, vitamins from group B were included, against the background of which the patient was stabilized.

In view of the history, the clinical findings and the cytological examination of cerebrospinal fluid – with data on tumor cells from poorly differentiated adenocarcinoma, the clinical diagnosis of Meningeal Carcinomatosis was made. Outpatient therapy with Dexamethasone tablets 8 mg daily and Oxycontin 10 mg daily when needed was prescribed. Consultations were held with an infectious disease specialist, who denied the possibility of a CNS infection, and an oncologist, who referred the patient to an oncology office at her place of residence.

Two weeks after discharge, there was a progressive deterioration in the patient's somatic and neurological condition and exitus.

ОБСЪЖДАНЕ

DISCUSSION

Meningeal carcinomatosis (neoplastic meningitis) was first reported by Ebert in 1870 and was considered a rare disease due to its diagnosis after death. Over the past three decades, leptomeningeal metastases have been recognized

with increasing frequency. This apparent increase in morbidity is the result of the availability of new diagnostic methods and improved therapy of systemic malignancies, which allow patients to live long enough to develop clinically apparent leptomeningeal disease. Many effective chemotherapy drugs do not cross the blood-brain barrier in adequate concentrations to kill tumor cells. The increasing incidence of this disease and the availability of new imaging studies are prompting clinicians to evaluate patients more carefully for possible meningeal involvement. However, the leptomeningeal carcinomatosis remains underdiagnosed. Although some patients have meningeal symptoms as first manifestation of malignancy, neoplastic meningitis usually occurs in patients with widespread and progressive systemic cancer. The most common solid tumors that metastasize to the meninges are adenocarcinomas [7].

[7].

In the case presented, the primary tumor focus was in the ovary, and the neurological manifestations appeared two years after diagnosing the tumor and progressed for several months.

Neurological symptoms such as headache and back and lower back pain are common but not required. Polyradiculopathies, multiple involvement of cranial nerves and changes in consciousness are the main manifestations, and often these manifestations are limited to only one and in most cases the treatment is directed entirely symptomatically. The combination of cranial neuropathy, such as unilateral facial weakness, hearing loss, optic nerve palsy, with bilateral asymmetric weakness of the lower limbs is often characteristic. The development of all these syndromes is usually subacute over weeks, with rapid progression as the disease progresses. The diagnosis can be established by identifying tumor cells in the cerebrospinal fluid by cytological examination and flow cytometry. Increased pressure in the subarachnoid space, increased protein, low glucose levels, and lympho-

cytic pleocytosis are other common CSF findings.

- Measurement of some biochemical markers of the tumor in the cerebrospinal fluid, such as lactate dehydrogenase, p-glucuronidase, p2-microglobulin, carcinoembryonic antigen (CEA), are another method for making the diagnosis and monitoring the response to therapy. These markers can be abnormal both in hematological diseases and in intracranial infections and parenchymal metastases. Therefore, in such cases, it is necessary to carry out imaging diagnostics and additional laboratory tests. Once the diagnosis is confirmed, treatment may be given by intrathecal (via lumbar puncture or catheter system) or systemic chemotherapy and radiotherapy or proton therapy, which are designed to relieve and slow the progression of symptoms [2, 3].

ЗАКЛЮЧЕНИЕ

6-10
2-4

CONCLUSION

- Meningeal carcinomatosis is a rare metastatic complication with a poor prognosis. Diagnosis and timely initiation of treatment can increase life expectancy to 6-10 months, without treatment the survival is 2-4 months.

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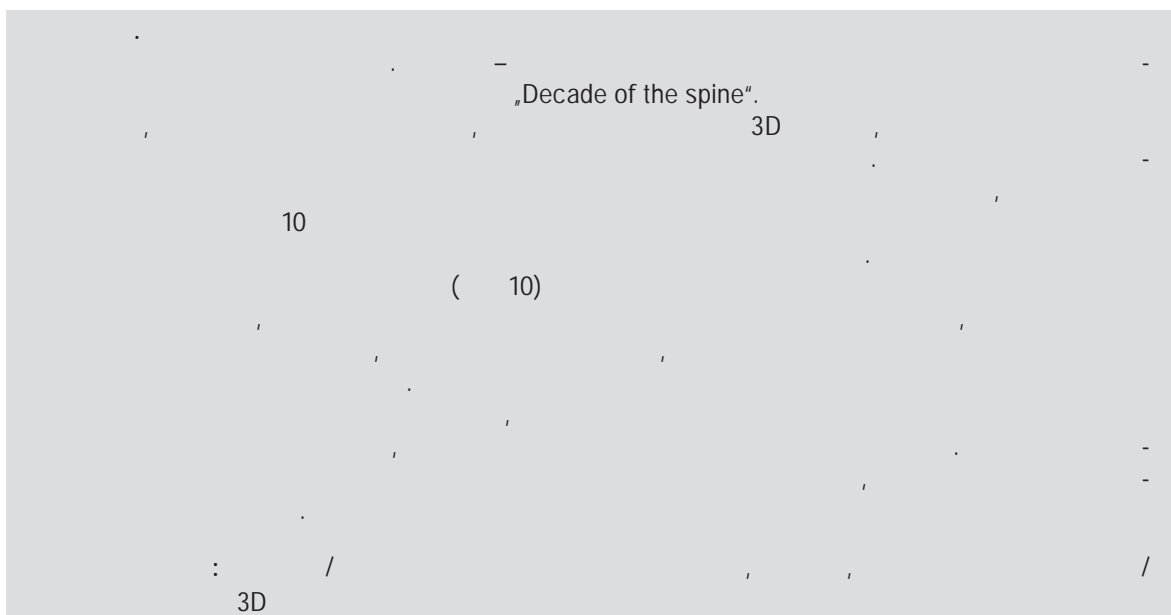
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3D

MIS

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FIRST LONG-SEGMENT 3D NAVIGATED MIS SPINAL RECONSTRUCTION FOR REVISION LUMBAR SURGERY IN BULGARIA

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Department of Neurosurgery and Spine surgery, MHAT "Heart and Brain" – Plevен

Abstract. In the last decade, spinal surgery has undergone an extremely rapid development, and it is no coincidence that Prof. Benzel – one of the founders of modern spinal surgery called it the "Decade of the spine". The introduction of endoscopic surgery, navigation systems, intraoperative 3D imaging, and robotic surgery have fundamentally changed the concept of spine surgery. These technologies provide the possibility of a complex completely minimally invasive surgery, which was unthinkable until 10 years ago, or the achievement of the goal of surgery was associated with a long recovery and many postoperative complications. We present a clinical case of a patient with multiple (more than 10) operative interventions on the lumbar segment of the spine, with post-operative complications such as infections, spinal instrumentation malfunction, neurological deficits, which led to severe disability and greatly reduced quality of life. Upon completion of the diagnostic process, severe deforming spondyloarthritis, impaired sagittal and coronal balance of the lumbar spine, combined with severe three-level instability were found. Preoperative surgical planning includes correction of sagittal and coronal balance, stabilization of unstable segments.

Key words: surgery/spine, lumbar segment, revision, spinal reconstruction/long segment 3D navigated

ВЪВЕДЕНИЕ

„Decade of the spine“.

In the last decade, spinal surgery has undergone an extremely rapid development, and it is no coincidence that Prof. Benzel – one of the founders of modern spinal surgery called it the “Decade of the spine”. The introduction of endoscopic surgery, navigation systems, intraoperative 3D imaging, and robotic surgery have fundamentally changed the concept of spine surgery. These technologies provide the possibility of a complex completely minimally invasive surgery, which was unthinkable until 10 years ago, or the achievement of the goal of surgery was associated with a long recovery and many postoperative complications.

INTRODUCTION

ОПИСАНИЕ НА КЛИНИЧЕН СЛУЧАЙ

60 kg, 150 cm,

L3-L4,
L5, S1

Th7.

L5-S1,

Th6

L3, L4, L5 S1

64

L3, L4,

L5-S1

CLINICAL CASE

We present a clinical case of a 64-year-old patient, 60 kg, 150 cm. She was admitted to the “Heart and Brain” Hospital in Pleven in a badly general condition, with intractable chronic pain in the lumbar spine that was unresponsive to medication. She experienced meningoencephalitis due to causative listeria. Subsequently, she developed a severe polyneuritis syndrome. In the following years, repeated operative interventions on the spine were performed – attempted posterior corporodesis, microdiscectomy of L5-S1, laminectomy of L3-L4, transpedicular instrumentation of L3, L4, L5, S1 with subsequent removal of the implants, laminectomy of Th6 and partial on Th7. A lower paraparesis with pronounced muscle atrophy and contractures of both feet is established, the woman has been on bed rest for three years and is unable to sit up due to the severe pain syndrome in the lumbar region and spinal instability.

The imaging diagnostics revealed degenerative-dystrophic changes along the entire lumbar spine, with pathological fractures of L3, L4, L5 and S1 bodies. As at L5-S1, adjacent soft tissue compaction was observed, a well-organized fluid-equivalent collection characteristic of spondylodiscitis was found on the

- right, as well as dysplastic changes of the left acetabulum and pathological fracture of both femurs (Fig. 1, Fig. 2). No deviations are detected from the blood tests.

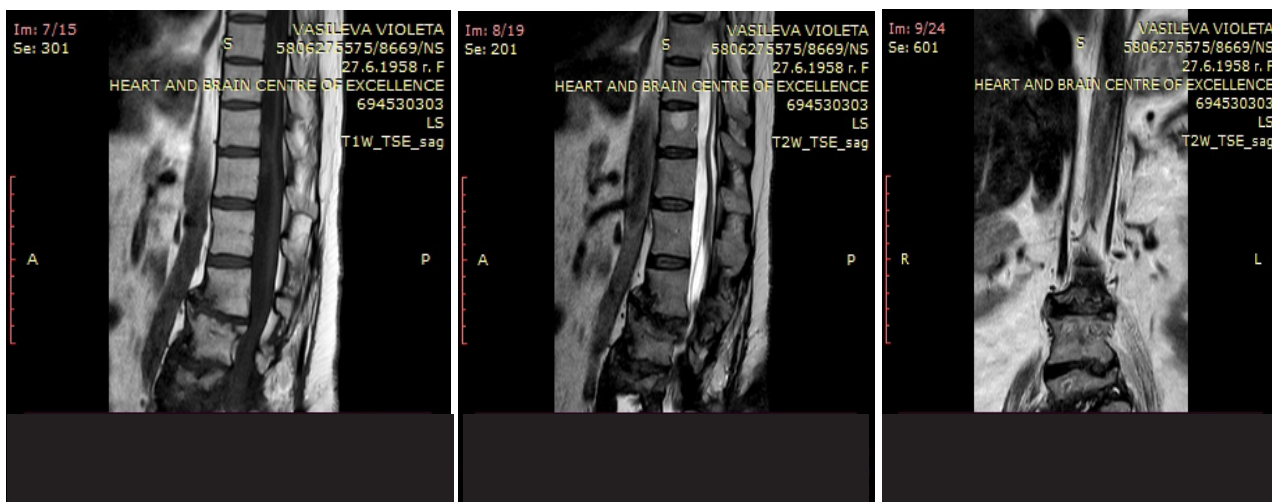


Fig. 1. Magnetic resonance tomography – lumbar segment – sagittal reconstruction T1 and T2 sequence. Coronal reconstruction

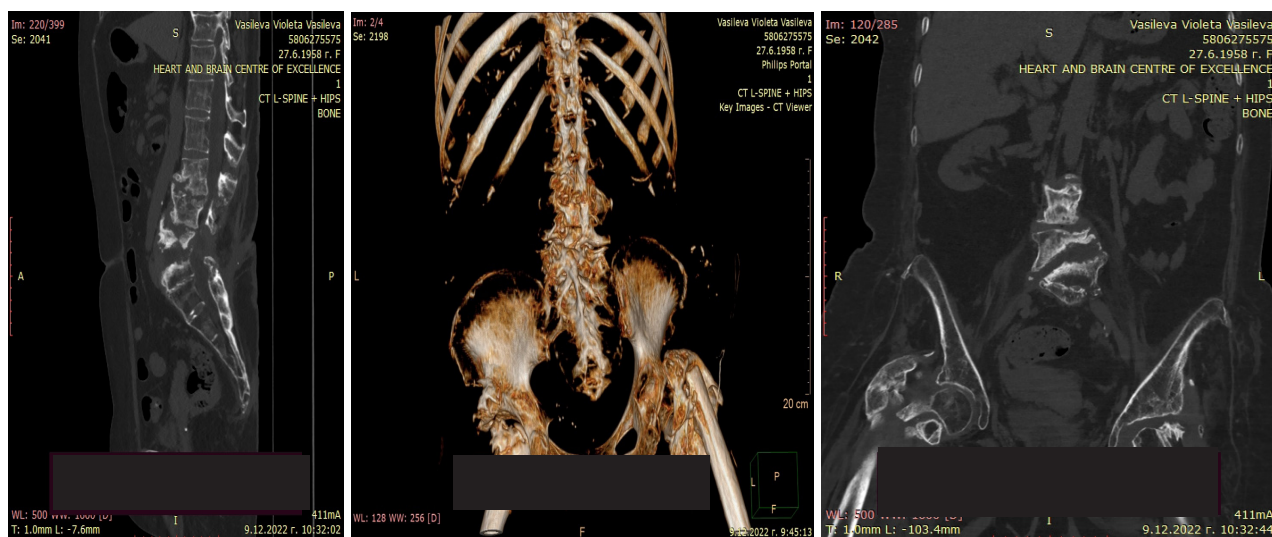


Fig. 2. Computer tomography reconstruction – lumbar segment and hip joints

МЕТОД

OLIF, ATP

METHOD

OLIF or ATP is an extremely advanced antero-lateral approach to the lumbar spine segment. This access is a powerful tool in the hands of an expe-

OLIF
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OLIF
(2-3 m
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[1, 4]. OLIF

- rienced spine surgeon, giving complete freedom of action in the correction of severe deformities and instability of the lumbar segment. The operative technique is minimally invasive and provides access to the disc space through an operative corridor between the peritoneum and the psoas major muscle. This procedure keep paraspinal muscles intact and require only gentle dissection of psoas muscle. The patient is positioned laterally, left or right, according to surgeon preference and targeting problem. A lateral abdominal wall incision is made, after referencing the levels and assessing the patient's angulation and position according to radiographic images. The indications for OLIF include all degenerative diseases of the spine, excellent results are achieved in the correction of sagittal and coronal deformities, especially in lumbar degenerative scoliosis accompanied by latero-listhesis or in patients requiring revision surgery (Fig. 3).

- The advantages of the OLIF surgical technique are the minimally invasive nature of the access (the surgical incision is only 2-3 cm and there is practically no blood loss), which allows extremely short postoperative recovery [1, 4]. OLIF involves rapid bone fusion, aggressive correction of deformities

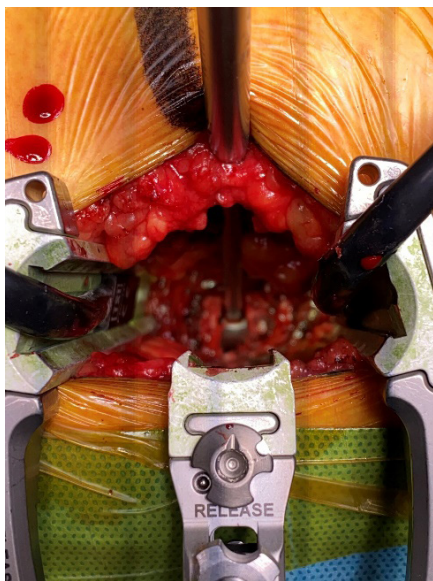


Fig. 3. OLIF technique – visualization of disk space

- due to the placement of a larger implants. Dissection and retraction of the anterior edge of the psoas major muscle allows the lumbar plexus to remain completely outside the operative field, which eliminates the need for intraoperative neuromonitoring. Preoperative planning includes as well careful assessment the position of the major vessels (aorta and inferior vena cava). The surgeon's perfect operative technique eliminates the risk of sympathetic trunk involvement, with manifest dysfunction, or vascular damage to a major vessel, as well as transient neurological deficit [9-12].

МАТЕРИАЛ

MATERIAL

- The patient was admitted in the clinic for the first time, on bed rest, with lower extremities paraparesis and intractable long-standing pain syndrome. Multiple spinal surgical interventions led to patient disability and occurrence of failed back surgery syndrome – FBSS. After completion of the diagnostic plan, clinical discussion and assessment of operative risk, spinal reconstruction and fusion – OLIF technique at three levels – was undertaken. The implementation of spinal instrumentation was unthinkable without the presence of neuronavigation and three-dimensional control – intraoperative 3D scanner “O-arm” and navigation system Stealth Station S8 (Fig. 4, Fig.5) due to absolutely changed and obliterated anatomy [13, 14, 15].

- Three “Oracle DePuy Synthes” artificial intervertebral spacers filled with autologous bone marrow matrix were placed, followed by posterior percutaneous (minimally invasive) instrumentation from L2 to S1 and screw augmentation with bone cement due to low bone density (Fig. 6).

- Operative time was significantly shortened thanks to intraoperative 3D scanner – O-arm during the placement of cages and transpedicular screws.

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[9-12].

МАТЕРИАЛ

и

– FBSS.

– OLIF

3D „O-arm”
Stealth Station S8 (. 4,

5) [13, 14, 15].
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“Oracle DePuy Synthes”,

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L2 S1

(. 6).

3D



Fig. 4. O-arm (left), 3D navigated screw placement – MIS technique (right)

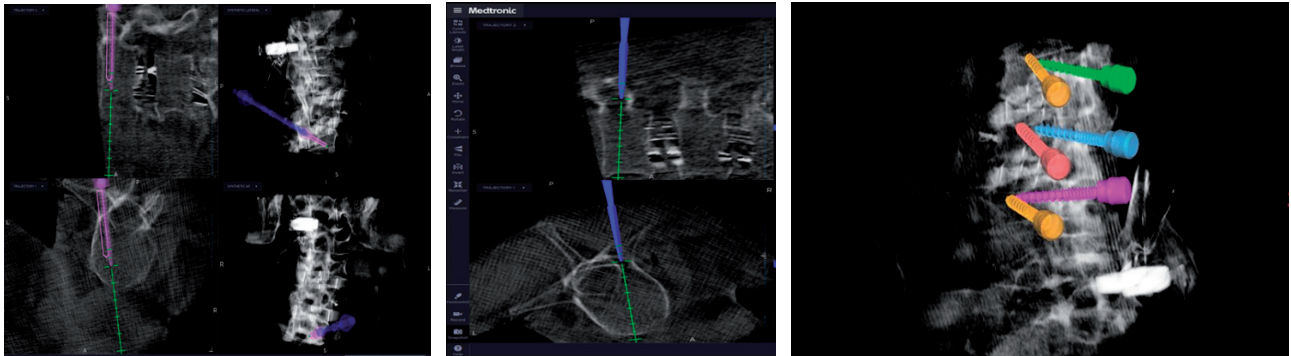


Fig. 5. Images from 3D navigation, on the left the implant is visualized in real time and dimensions and its direction of implantation

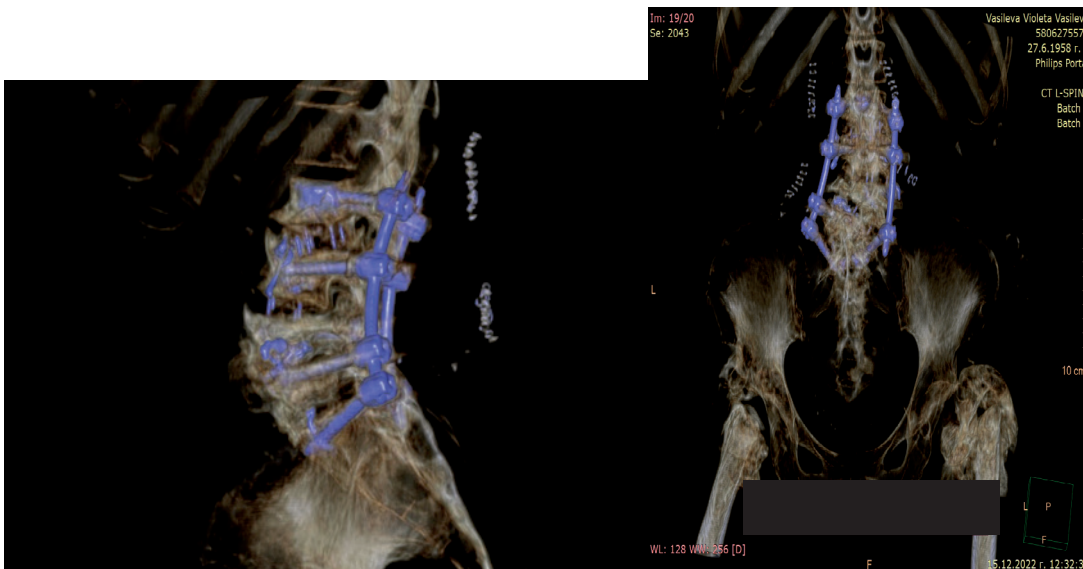


Fig. 6. Postoperative results

Stealth Station S8 3D -
OLIF L2-L3, L3-L4, L4-L5,
L2-S1

- With the help of Stealth Station S8 – intraoperative neuronavigation and 3D O-arm, OLIF L2-L3, L3-L4 and L4-L5 was realized as well as L2-S1 spinal instrumentation without any kind of complications. An optimal result of alienation and reconstruction of the spinal column in the lumbar segment was achieved on a postoperative control scan. The patient recovered quickly with a reported partial reduction of the neurological deficit, being discharged in a good general somatic condition and referred to the department of orthopedics.

ОБСЪЖДАНЕ

2-3

DISCUSSION

2-3 years ago, performing such operative intervention would have been impossible or would have been associated with a serious length of operative time, significant risk of malfunction and malposition of the implants, significant intraoperative radiation load of the entire operating team and the patient, due to extensive fluoroscopic control, necessary in the process of implantation and assessment of the position of intervertebral spacers and transpedicular screws. The above-mentioned risks are minimized by the use of a new generation of intraoperative 3D visualization – O-arm, which increases accuracy of implants placement and shortened extremely operative time and radiation load of the team and patient. In this patient, the severity of the degenerative changes and disturbed architectonics of the lumbar segment make performing the surgery without these technologies impossible or high-risky [2, 5].

Conventional 2D radiography is the main intraoperative method for assessing the position of placed intervertebral spacers and percutaneous transpedicular screws. The introduction of high-tech 3D navigated surgery in the treatment of spinal pathologies, especially in revision surgery and deformities, has numerous advantages over classical operative methods using conventional 2D X-ray diagnostics.

- O-

3D

2D

3D

2D

VAS
10, VAS

– 7-8
– 1-2 10.

Follow up the patient showed significant reduction of pain syndrome, which was the main indication together with spinal instability. VAS before surgery 7-8 out of 10 and VAS after surgery 1-2 out of 10.

ЗАКЛЮЧЕНИЕ

CONCLUSION

3D
MIS (
3D
MIS
OLIF
3D

: OLIF –
, ATP –

Due to the lack of direct visualization, as in traditional open operative approaches, minimally invasive spinal surgery relies entirely on radiographic images and computer-generated reconstructions. The development of 3D navigation technologies allow surgical intervention in severe spinal pathologies through MIS (minimally invasive) surgical techniques. The experience of our clinic showed that the introduction of these technologies in minimally invasive spine surgery leads to excellent results in the correction of severe spondylolisthesis, scoliosis and other pathologies of the spine and we are proud to present this clinical case, as it is the first 3D-navigated long-segment MIS reconstruction of a lumbar segment in Bulgaria. The other very important point is that this avant-garde and powerful surgical technique – OLIF is performed routinely only in the Clinic of Neurosurgery and Spinal Surgery – “Heart and Brain” Hospital Pleven. The minimal invasive 3D navigated surgery become a cutting-edge technique which is available only in the most specialized centers for spine surgery in the world. It is gaining more and more popularity in the field of spinal surgery by demonstrating unprecedented accuracy of the placed implants, a much shorter recovery period, correspondingly reduced hospital stay and reduced treatment costs.

Abbreviations used: OLIF – Oblique lumbar interbody fusion, ATP – Anterior to psoas

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**HEREDITARY THORACIC AORTIC DISEASE – SIGNIFICANCE OF DISEASE IDENTIFICATION****Е. Betcheva-Krajcir, P. Angelova-Hristova, T. Vassilev,**

Laboratory of Medical Genetics, Center of Molecular Pathology, Multiprofile Hospital for Active Treatment "Heart and Brain", Pleven, Bulgaria

Abstract. The hereditary thoracic aortic disease (HTAD) is a group of conditions of congenital aortic chest wall weakness, associated with a predisposition to aortic dilatation, aneurysm and their acute complications – aortic dissection and rupture. Nearly 20% of all patients with TAD have a genetic predisposition and additional lifetime risk factors (e.g., arterial hypertension) provoke clinical manifestation of the disease. HTAD can be syndromic or non-syndromic; there are at least 16 genes, known to be associated with it. Identification of the familial (hereditary) form of the disease enables early detection of other family members at-risk for aortic accidents. In some families, the exact genetic defect can be identified, thus definitively confirming the diagnosis, and sought for in further relatives. Individuals at an increased risk of aortopathy are subject to regular follow-ups and timely aortic replacement before lethal acute complication occur.

Key words: Hereditary thoracic aortic disease (HTAD); aortic dilatation; thoracic aortic aneurysm; aortic dissection; syndromic HTAD; non-syndromic HTAD

ВЪВЕДЕНИЕ

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INTRODUCTION

- Thoracic aortic disease (TAD) or aortopathy is an umbrella term for different pathological changes that affect the wall of the thoracic aorta – from its origin at the aortic root, through the sinotubular junction, the

ascending aorta, the aortic arch, and the descending aorta, up to the point of the aortic hiatus of the diaphragm. TAD includes the aortic dilatation, aneurysm, dissection and rupture [1].

Aortic **dilatation** is defined by an increase in aortic cross-sectional diameter above the norm for a given age and total body surface area (on average > 40 mm in diameter at the aortic root) and with a z-score¹ > 2 [1]. The aortic **aneurysm** represents a more significant, persistent enlargement (bulging) of the aorta, which transverse diameter exceeds 50 % of the normal size. Aneurysms of the aortic root and ascending arch have the greatest clinical significance [2]. The aortic root aneurysm is detected by echocardiographic measurement of the aortic diameter at the end of the diastole, whereas the aneurysm of the ascending aorta should be evaluated by CT or MRI imaging [1, 3, 4]. An aneurysm might remain asymptomatic for a long period of time but is a major risk factor for an abrupt occurrence of a life-threatening **aortic dissection** [2]. In contrast to a dissection, which involves **rupture** of the two inner layers of the aortic wall (*intima and media*), retention of blood between the inner and middle layers and separation of the aortic tissue layers along the aorta, aortic rupture is a complete tear through all three layers of the aortic wall (*the third being the adventitia*) and causes acute extravascular hemorrhage within the thoracic cavity [1].

Most TAD cases are sporadic or **non-hereditary** and only about 20% are **hereditary** (HTAD). Patients with HTAD inherit genetic variants that confer predisposition to aortopathy, but additional lifetime risk factors trigger disease manifestation [2]. Risk factors include persistent untreated arterial hyper-

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¹<https://marfan.org/dx/z-score-adults/>

¹The z-score demonstrates the degree of deviation from an average value of a measurable index – the aortic lumen area at the sinus of Valsalva, for a given age, population, gender, height, weight, etc. Calculated with the Marfan Syndrome Association's online calculator, available at <https://marfan.org/dx/z-score-adults/>

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[2].

[1, 2].

20%

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40%

10 45%

(0,2%) [1].

[2, 5-8].

16 [1, 2].

[1, 2, 9].

- tension, tobacco consuming, hypercholesterolemia and atherosclerosis, aortic valve pathology (e.g. congenital defects such as bicuspid aortic valve), vasculitis, chest trauma, and other [1, 2]. Common genetic risk factors are deleterious genetic variants in genes, encoding key structural connective tissue proteins or enzymes. Some pathogenic variants in those genes have been identified to be associated with HTAD [2].

- HTAD can present clinically in two forms: syndromic or **non-syndromic** [1, 2]. The non-syndromic form of HTAD is characterized by isolated aortopathy, without systemic involvement. About 20% of the individuals with non-syndromic HTAD have at least one affected relative (e.g. have a positive family history), and in about 30% of the non-syndromic familial cases, a deleterious genetic variant can be identified [2]. In non-syndromic HTAD patients, aortic dissection occurs in up to 40% of the affected individuals by an average of 43 years. Regrettably, there is often no evidence of prior aortic dilatation in those patients (in 55% to 90% of the cases). Thus, an aortic dilatation remains an unreliable marker for individuals-at-risk screening; alternative prognostic markers for clinical application are being extensively researched. Some authors consider the congenital bicuspid aortic valve as a subclass of non-syndromic HTAD, although aortic dissection is very rare in this group (up to 0.2%) [1]. The **syndromic** HTAD involves both TAD and systemic disease [2, 5-8]. Different pathogenic variants in the same gene might cause syndromic or non-syndromic form of HTAD. Up to date, the association of at least 16 genes with HTAD has been demonstrated [1, 2].

- Early identification of individuals at-risk for HTAD, their consistent follow-up, and timely prophylactic replacement of the damaged aortic segment are critical measures to lower mortality rates from sudden cardiac death among patients and their relatives [1, 2, 9]. In our experience, almost all pa-

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КЛИНИЧНИ СЛУЧАИ
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De Bakey I),

tients with aortopathy are being recognized only after they are admitted to an emergency unit or cardiology due to severe, acute retrosternal pain. The clinical diagnosis of aortopathy is confirmed by imaging, e.g. echocardiography, computed tomography, aortography. A young age of onset (before or around 50 years of age) and a positive family history of aortopathy or sudden cardiac death are suggestive findings for the physicist for a HTAD, with Marfan syndrome being the most common differential diagnosis. In agreement with the literature [1, 2] our experience over the last year has shown that the most common form of HTAD is the non-syndromic form.

In this article, we summarize the clinical findings of patients with suspected non-syndromic HTAD in our hospital in the past year and referred to genetic counselling. Our **aim** is to raise awareness of this life-threatening condition and current guidelines, which recommend follow-up and surveillance for all patients with clinically suspected HTAD, as well for all their first- and second-degree relatives.

CLINICAL CASES

Personal and family history

Table 1 summarizes the clinical findings in five patients referred to genetic counseling in the past year due to suspected hereditary thoracic aortic disease (HTAD).

All patients were admitted to the emergency unit because of acute retrosternal oppression and precordial pain, shortness of breath and/or fatigue. All patients were male. Their age at initial diagnosis of aortopathy (I71.2 Acute aortic syndrome, ICD-10) was between 33 and 55 years. One patient had dilatation of the ascending aorta, two patients had Stanford type A aortic dissection (one of whom was specified as De Bakey type I), one had aneurysm

II De Bakey, Stanford B

(DeBakey III).

(II NYHA)

III

7 [10, 11] – 1, 2 3

-0

Z-score 2,

of the ascending aorta and De Bakey type II aortic dissection, and one had Stanford type B aortic dissection (DeBakey III). Two of the patients had a comorbid condition, chronic congestive heart failure (NYHA class II) and two had stage III hypertension, one of them having both conditions. One patient died of a "sudden cardiac death" shortly after the genetic counseling.

None of the patients showed signs of systemic connective tissue involvement, nor had significant skeletal alterations or facial dysmorphism; the systemic score of all patients was well below the cutoff value of 7 points [10, 11]: two patients had 0 points; one had 1, one had 2, and one had 3 points. No signs of ectopia lentis or other connective tissue associated ophthalmopathies were identified.

Three patients had abnormal Z-scores greater than 2; however, the rest of the patients (two) had already had aortic root replacement and no information on the Valsalva sinus size prior to operation was available.

A positive family history of aortopathy was found for two of the patients, and a sudden cardiac death of the mother was suspected in a third one.

ОБСЪЖДАНЕ

DISCUSSION

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[1, 2].

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Thoracic aortic disease (TAD) or aortopathy is a collective term involving various pathological alterations of the wall of the thoracic part of the aorta besides atherosclerotic alterations; it includes the aortic dilatation, aneurysm, dissection, and rupture [1, 2]. The thoracic aortic dilatation and aneurysm remain generally asymptomatic for a long time but are a considerable risk factor for life-threatening acute complications such as dissection and rupture. Depending on the part of the thoracic aorta involved – the ascending, the descending or both, aortopathies are being classified according to two systems – the DeBakey

1.

	AO1 (.)							Z-score, D		
I	44 49	171.2						2.27 4.13 m		> 4 m.
II	33 41†	Bailey I, Stanford, De 2013						-1.18 3.29 m*	2 Dpt.	St. post VR
III	55 58	171.2						6.63 5.40 m		St. post
IV	38 63	171.2						2.20 4.10 m		St. post DeBailey II.
V	51 51	171.0						-1.426 3.3 m		Stanford (DeBailey III), aa. Iliacae.

1 – Age of onset.

Table 1. Summary of the personal and family history of patients with suspected HTAD, referred to our genetic counselling for one year

Patient	AOI and Current age (yr)	Gender	Principal diagnosis and treatment	Other diagnoses	Family history	Facial dysmorphism	Systematic score	Z-score, Valsalva D	Eyes	Imaging and other tests
I	44 49		I71.2 Acute aortic syndrome. Initial ectasia of the ascending aorta. Dilatation of right atrium and ascending aorta.	-	- Brother - CHD, 37 yrs. † 47 yrs - Ao dissection. - Father † 63. AMI - Mother CRF † 53 yrs.	No	1 pt. = thoracic asymmetry	2.27 4.13 cm	No	ECG: no pathological findings. EchoCG: Valsalva > 4 cm. CTa: no evidence of aortic dissection. Initial ectasia of the ascending aorta identified. Aortography: no pathological findings.
II	33 41†		Status post replacement of the ascending aorta due to Stanford type A dissection, De Bakey type I, high-grade aortic regurgitation 2013. Aneurysms of the thoracic aorta, no rupture risk 2022.	Arteria Lusoria with Kommerell's diverticulum	- Mother † 20 yrs, heart-related death	No	3 pt. = pectus carinatum (2) + gibbus (1)	-1.18 3.29 cm*	Mio-pia (2) Dpt.)	ECG: no pathological findings. EchoCG: LVH. St. post Ao ascendens dissection Stanford A. St. Post AVR with good functioning mechanical prosthesis. Ectasia of ascending aorta. CTa: thoracic aortic aneurysms, no evidence of rupture risk. Aortography: no evidence of aortic dissection.
III	55 58		I71.2. Acute aortic syndrome. Status post surgery for Stanford type A aortic dissection 2019.	I50.0 NYHA CCHF II FC	- Father - 80 yrs MV prolapse	No	0 pt.	6.63 5.40 cm	Presbiopia	ECG: no pathological findings. EchoCG, CTa. Ao ascendens after dissection Stanford A. Dilated aorta at Valsalva sinus. False lumen in the abdominal aorta.
IV	38 63		I71.2 Acute aortic syndrome. Status post prosthesis of ascending aorta and aortic arch with Unigrift prosthesis #32 for ascending aortic aneurysm and aortic dissection type II according to De Bakey (10/1996). Mild aortic regurgitation.	I11.9. AH III. I50.0 NYHA CCHF II.	- Brother - † c. 50 - Ao aneurysm with dissection. - Father † 60 yrs - Father's uncle † 29 yrs and his son † 40 yrs - "heart-related" - Paternal grandfather † 54 yrs from "heart-related"	No	2 pt. = pectus carinatum (2)	2.20 4.10 cm	Presbiopia	ECG and Holter ECG: no pathological findings. EchoKG, Ao ascendens and arc. after DeBakey II dissection. Dilated LA and RA. CTa: Dilated left main pulmonary artery, truncus brachiocephalicus and right subclavian artery in proximal segment. Eccentric thrombosis in proximal third of left common carotid artery and left subclavian artery without hemodynamically significant stenosis. Aortography: no pathological findings.
V	51 51		I71.0. Stanford type B aortic dissection (DeBakey III).	I11.9. AH III st. Arteria Lusoria	- Mother - CRF	No	0 pt.	-1.426 3.3 cm*	Presbiopia	ECG: LVH. Dilated aorta. Suspected flap in abdominal aorta. CTa, Aortography: dissection of descending Stanford type B Ao (DeBakey III), intimal flap from Ao arch to aa. iliacae.

1 - Age of onset, age at first diagnosis. M - Male. * - No data on values before surgery, current values are given. † - deceased.

CHD - congenital heart disease. Ao - aortic. AMI - acute myocardial infarction. CRF - chronic renal failure. HF - heart failure. CCHF - chronic congestive heart failure. AH - arterial hypertension. LVH - left ventricular hypertrophy. ECG - electrocardiogram. EchoCG - Echocardiogram. CTa - computer tomography, aortography. LA - left atrium. RA - right atrium

Stanford. – DeBakey

I DeBakey;

II DeBakey;

– III DeBakey. I II

DeBakey

Stanford, III DeBakey –

Stanford [1, 3].

20%

(),

40-45

1/5

1/3

[1, 2].

[1, 2].

(–

DeBakey Stanford) [3].

and the Stanford classification. If both the ascending and the descending thoracic aorta are involved, the aortopathy is categorized as DeBakey type I; if only the ascending aorta is involved – it is classified as DeBakey type II; the isolated involvement of the descending aorta is named DeBakey type III. The DeBakey types I and II comprise the Stanford type A, and DeBakey type III overlaps with the Stanford type B [1, 3].

Most TAD cases are non-hereditary, sporadic findings. Perhaps about 20% of the affected have a hereditary form of the condition (HTAD). Those patients inherit major predisposing genetic variants but have no signs or symptoms of the disease during their childhood or young adulthood. However, due to the additional deleterious effect of various environmental risk factors, they develop aortopathy with clinical onset earlier than the general population.

The HTAD can be syndromic and non-syndromic, i.e. the clinical manifestation can correspondingly involve aortopathy without or with systematic involvement. The average age of onset of the non-syndromic HTAD is 40-45 years; about 1/5 of the patients have a positive family history. Recently, the isolated congenital bicuspid aortic valve has been referred to the group of the non-syndromic HTAD. A deleterious causative genetic variant can be found in less than 1/3 of the non-syndromic cases [1, 2].

Besides the alterations of the aortic wall, the syndromic form of the HTAD is marked by an essential connective tissue defect, involving other organs and systems of the body. General weakness of the wall of various blood vessels and hollow internal organs, laxative skin, susceptibility to herniation and pneumothorax, hypermobile joints and overall skeletal deformities are commonly found. Syndromic HTADs, the most common of which is the Marfan syndrome, are found rather rarely [1, 2].

Usually, the aortic aneurysm and its acute complications in HTAD occur limited to the aor-

[12-14].

Stanford B (DeBakey III)

16

ACTA2, FOXE3, LOX, MYH11, MYLK, PRKG1, COL3A1, FBN1, SMAD3, TGFB2, TGFBR1, TGFBR2.

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Marfan –

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tic root and the ascending part, thus being most commonly DeBakey type II and Stanford type A [3]. However, rare cases of aneurysm and dissection of the descending thoracic aorta – Stanford B or DeBakey III type, have also been described in both syndromic and non-syndromic HTAD [12-14]. To date, there are at least 16 known genes associated with syndromic and non-syndromic HTAD. Some of them are ACTA2, FOXE3, LOX, MYH11, MYLK, PRKG1, COL3A1 and other collagen genes, FBN1, SMAD3, TGFB2, TGFBR1, and TGFBR2. Most of them are responsible for the synthesis of essential aortic wall components, such as fibrillin, collagen, lysyl oxidase, muscle fibers, protein kinases, or of signal transduction factors. Some syndromic and non-syndromic HTAD associated are depicted in Table 2.

Some syndromic forms of HTAD are:

- **Marfan syndrome** – it affects the connective tissue of many organ systems of the entire body; the clinical manifestation includes aortopathy (aneurysm, dissection); mitral valve insufficiency;

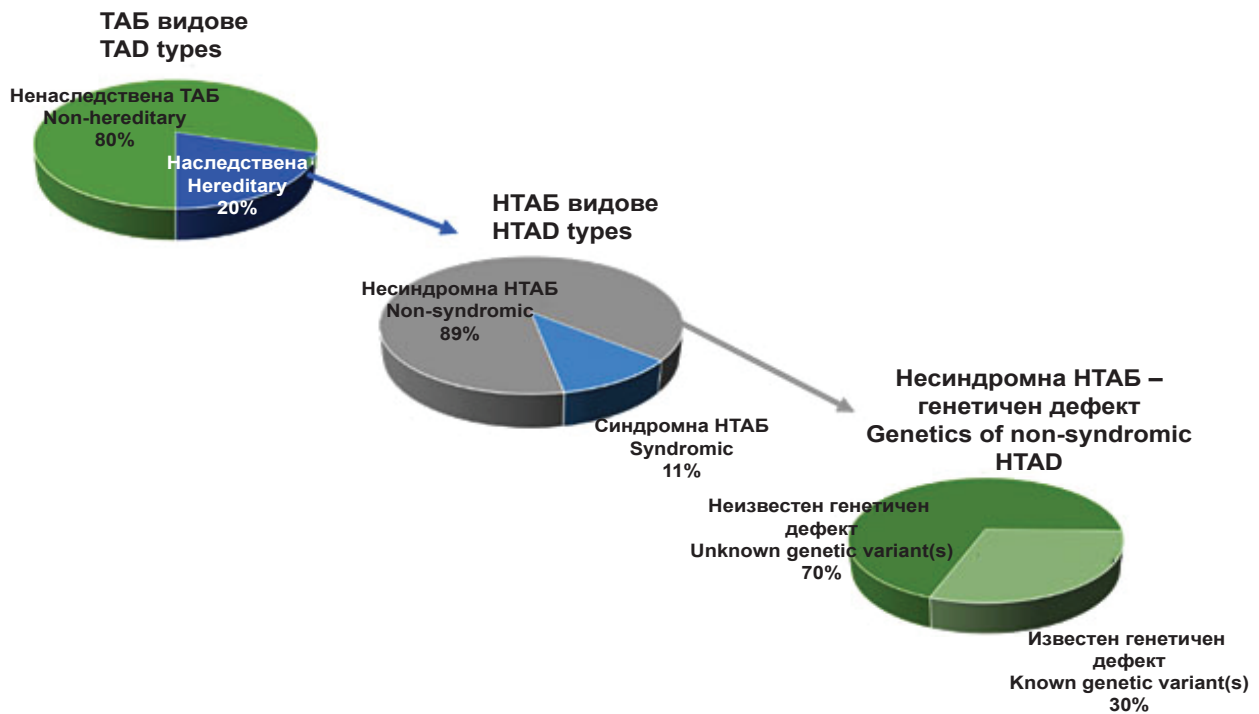


Fig. 1. Types of thoracic aortic disease (TAD); types of hereditary thoracic aortic disease (HTAD)

2.

[1, 2]

Table 2. Syndromic and non-syndromic HTAD associated genes [1, 2]

Gene	Non-syndromic HTAD	Syndromic HTAD	Other syndromic HTAD symptoms	Frequency of sHTAD
ACTA2	(14%) Yes (14% of cases with mutation)	Multisystem smooth muscle dysfunction syndrome	Premature coronary artery disease, ischemic stroke, Moyamoya disease, congenital aortic valve defects	12- 21%
TGFBR2 TGFBR1 SMAD3 TGFB2 TGFB3	(35%) Possible Possible Yes, (35% of mutations) Possible	- Loeys-Dietz - Loeys-Dietz - Loeys-Dietz - Loeys-Dietz - Loeys-Dietz 5; Rienhoff - Loeys-Dietz syndrome - Loeys-Dietz syndrome - Loeys-Dietz syndrome; aneurysm-osteoarthritis syndrome. - Loeys-Dietz syndrome - Loeys-Dietz syndrome type 5	Abdominal aortic aneurysm, other vascular aneurysms, including intracranial; bifurcated uvula, cleft palate, craniosynostoses; Marfan-like habitus.	5 % 3 % 2 % 1 % Very rarely
FBN1	Very common	Marfan Marfan syndrome (Marfan)	(7) Aortic root dilatation, lens ectopia, myopia and skeletal deformities (systemic score 7)	3%
LOX	/ Yes	-	Aneurysm of abdominal aorta and hepatic artery, bicuspid aortic valve	1,5%
FOXE3	/ Yes	-		1,4%
MAT2A	-	-	Bicuspid aortic valve	1%
MYH11	/ Yes	-	ductus arteriosus Ductus arteriosus persistens	1%
MYLK	/ Yes	-		1%
PRKG1	/ Yes	-	/ Coronary artery aneurysm/dissection and torsion	1%
MFAP5	-	-	Atrial fibrillation, mitral valve prolapse, arterial torsion	0.25%
BGN	-	Meester-Loeys / syndrome (OMIM 300989)		rarely
COL3A1	Possible	IV () Ehlers-Danlos type IV (vascular type)	Translucent skin, atypical face, easy skin wounding and bruising; aortic dilatation; arterial fragility; internal organ wall rupture	rarely
ROBO4 GATA5 NOTCH1	With bicuspid aortic valve	-		rarely
COL1A1 COL1A2	-	Osteogenesis imperfecta		
	Unknown	/ Unknown		

Клинични случаи / Case reports

• **MASS** (Marfan-like habitus, severe myopia, mitral valve prolapse, skin stretch marks (striae), skeletal deformities and a borderline aortic root size [14].

• **Shprintzen-Goldberg (SGS)** is a very rare connective tissue congenital disorder with less than 50 cases worldwide. Along with Marfan-like habitus and cardiovascular anomalies, it is characterized by facial dysmorphism, cranial synostoses, neurological involvement, and intellectual disability [1, 4, 15].

• **Turner syndrome** – it is a relatively common chromosomal aberration with a complete or partial X-chromosome loss. The classical² disease phenotype includes female secondary sex characteristics with primary infertility due to congenital gonadism. Aortic dilatation is found in about 35% and dissection in up to 5% of the cases with average age of onset 33 years [1, 4, 16].

• **Osteogenesis imperfecta syndrome** is characterized by susceptibility to severe pathological bone fractures after minor trauma. The disease has several forms and is caused by pathogenic variants in different genes, most commonly – the collagen genes COL1A1 and COL1A2. Aortic dilatation is found in up to 30% of the cases, but dissections are very rare; the mean age of onset is 51 years [1, 4].

• **Arterial tortuosity syndrome (ATS)** is characterized by a widespread elongation and tortuosity of the aorta, the pulmonary and other mid-size arteries, making them prone to aneurysms and stenosis, associated with acute ischemic events

• **MASS** is similar to Marfan syndrome and caused as well by mutations in the FBN1 gene; phenotype includes Marfan-like habitus, severe myopia, mitral valve prolapse, skin stretch marks (striae), skeletal deformities and a borderline aortic root size [14].

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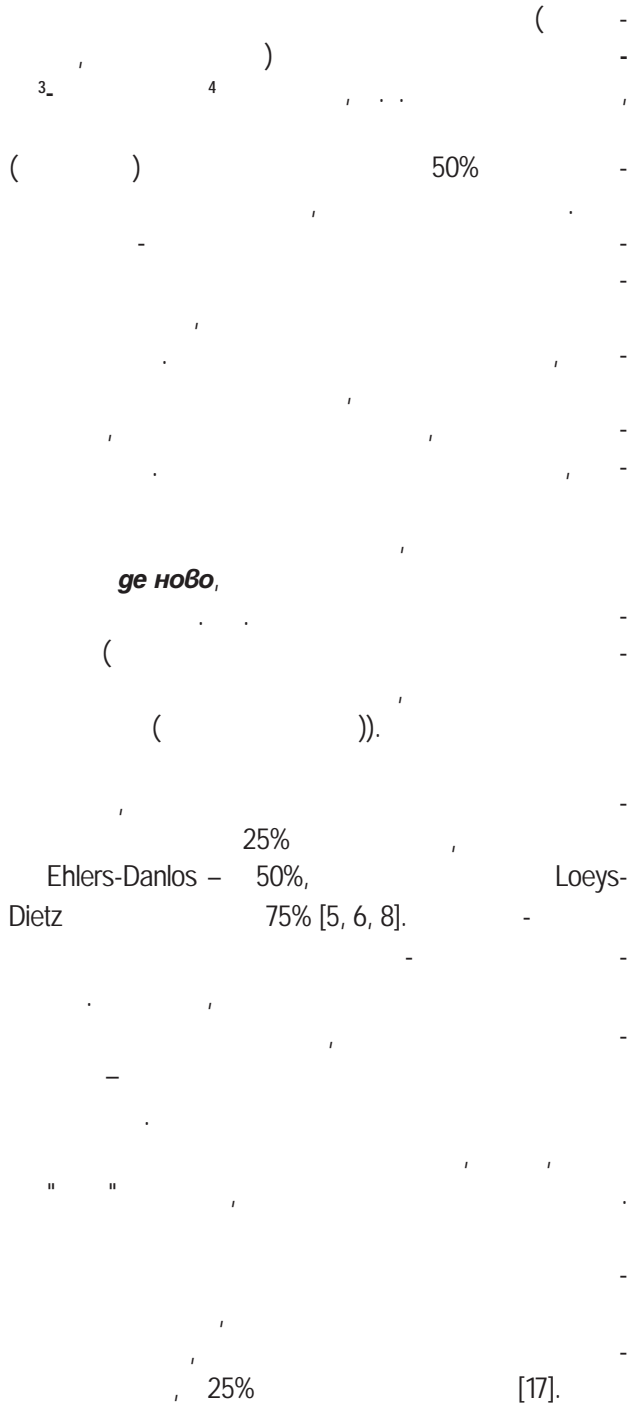
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²Besides the complete form of Turner syndrome (monosomy X), mosaic forms are also common, in which a certain percentage of the individual's cells have a normal karyotype of 46,XX or 46,XY, and another proportion of cells lack a complete second sex chromosome; the percentage of aberrant cells determines the extend of phenotype expression; rarely, a male phenotype is described.

SLC2A10 [17].

УНАСЛЕДЯВАНЕ



or dissections. Systemic connective-tissue symptoms are also typical: joint hypermobility, stretchy and tortuous skin, contractures, hernias, etc. The disease is inherited as an autosomal recessive trait and is associated with mutations in the SLC2A10 gene [17].

INHERITANCE

Most forms of HTAD (both syndromic and non-syndromic) are inherited by an **autosomal³-dominant⁴** manner with a 50% chance of mutation transmission in the next generation. In contrast to classical autosomal dominant traits, not all HTAD affected individuals have an affected parent. Relatively often the proband's condition is a result of a **de novo** occurring mutation or of a parental gonosomal mosaicism. The arising of de novo mutations is very common for the HTAD syndromes; for example, in Marfan syndrome it is estimated to cause 25%, in Ehlers-Danlos syndrome – 50% and in Loeys-Dietz syndrome – 75 % of the cases [5, 6, 8].

Autosomal recessive inheritance in HTAD is very rare. All affected individuals inherit one pathogenic variant from each of their parents, who – being carriers are personally not affected by the disease. The risk for all siblings of the proband from the same parents is 25% for each pregnancy [17].

Turner syndrome in its classic form is a non-hereditary chromosomal aberration. The condition of the affected individual results from a de novo event during gametogenesis or embryogenesis. The proband himself is usually infertile and cannot transmit the condition to next generation [16].

³Autosomal means that the trait-defining gene is located on one of the non-sex chromosomes (autosomes).
⁴Dominant are traits for which a mutation in only one of the two gene copies is sufficient for clinical manifestation of a trait.

Turner

ПРЕПОРЪКИ

(next generation sequencing, NGS)

() [4].

[16].

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE HTAD AFFECTED

The physical examination of the probands included in this summary did not confirm the presence of any systemic signs and symptoms and syndromic forms of HTAD was ruled out. However, the early age of onset of aortopathy and a positive family history in some cases are suggestive findings for non-syndromic HTAD and indicative for molecular genetic analysis. The lack of typical genotype-phenotype correlations makes it impossible to preselect the best candidate gene for testing. Therefore, the best diagnostic approach is a targeted multigene sequence and deletion-duplication analysis. Acceptable but costly alternatives are whole exome or whole genome analyses [4].

The identification of the molecular background of proband's condition has important diagnostic, prognostic and predictive value for the proband and for proband's first- and second-degree relatives. After a pathogenic genetic variant is found in the affected family member, cascade testing of further relatives coupled with genetic counseling is recommended. Knowing the exact type of gene alteration is important for estimating the relative risk for complications and average age of onset of disease manifestation. This enables personalised clinical decision-making for other mutation-carriers in the family and a psycho-emotional relieve for the non-carriers [4, 9].

Since Bulgarian patients must cover molecular genetic testing expenses with personal funds and only a few can afford it, many suspected HTAD individuals cannot undergo the necessary testing. Current guidelines recommend Cardiological follow-up of all patients with suspected HTAD and their first- and second-degree relatives, irrespective of their unknown mutational status [4].

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ACC/AHA⁵ [18],

Guidelines for patients with suspected familial TAD recommend intensive cardio-vascular monitoring and dynamic follow-up by imaging studies, e.g. echocardiography, CT, and/or MRI, every 3 to 12 months. If there is no change in the diameter of the aortic dilatation, annual examinations are continued. If dilatation is more than half a centimeter (0.5 cm) per year, and the ascending aorta/aortic root diameter is greater than 4 cm, more frequent (every 3 months) imaging is recommended [1, 2, 4].

First-degree relatives of TAD patients (brothers, sisters, parents, and children) should also undergo an annual imaging screening for pathology of the thoracic aorta (especially at the root and the ascending arch). It is recommended that close relatives of an affected individual with an unknown (not found or not tested) genetic defect should undergo annual monitoring by echocardiography of the aortic root and by computer axial tomography/magnetic resonance imaging (CAT/MRI) for the ascending aortic. The first identified alteration is usually an aortic dilatation; however, as mentioned above, this trait is not always present prior major complications and therefore is unreliable independent marker [1, 2, 4].

Stringent control of arterial blood pressure in affected and at-risk individuals and timely medical treatment is highly recommended. The ACC/AHA⁵ recommend beta-blockers as first-line therapy in all cases of thoracic aortic aneurysm [18] and consideration of such therapy in case of dilated only, non-aneurysm findings. Alternative angiotensin-1-receptor inhibitor therapy in case of beta-blocker intolerance is under investigation. There is solid evidence that calcium antagonists and fluoroquinolones have deleterious effect on aneurysm development, however, de-

pending on underlying genetic defect. ESC/ESH⁶ recommend strict maintenance of arterial blood pressure values below 130/80 mmHg [19]. Apart from arterial hypertension, prevention and control of other risk factors such as hypercholesterolemia, tobacco consume and others is highly recommended as well. Contact sports and isometric exercises should be avoided [1, 3, 4, 9, 18, 19].

ЗАКЛЮЧЕНИЕ

CONCLUSION

The non-syndromic form of hereditary TAD is a relatively unknown and under-recognized clinical diagnosis. Awareness of referral cardiologists on recognizing the condition is essential for surveillance, follow-up and clinical decision-making for both the affected index patients and for their first- and second-degree relatives, who might as well be at risk for acute cardiovascular events.

! We acknowledge the patients and their families!

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⁵ACC = American College of Cardiology; AHA = American Heart Association –

⁶ESC = European Society of Cardiology; ESH = European Society of Hypertension –

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⁶ESC = European Society of Cardiology; ESH = European Society of Hypertension

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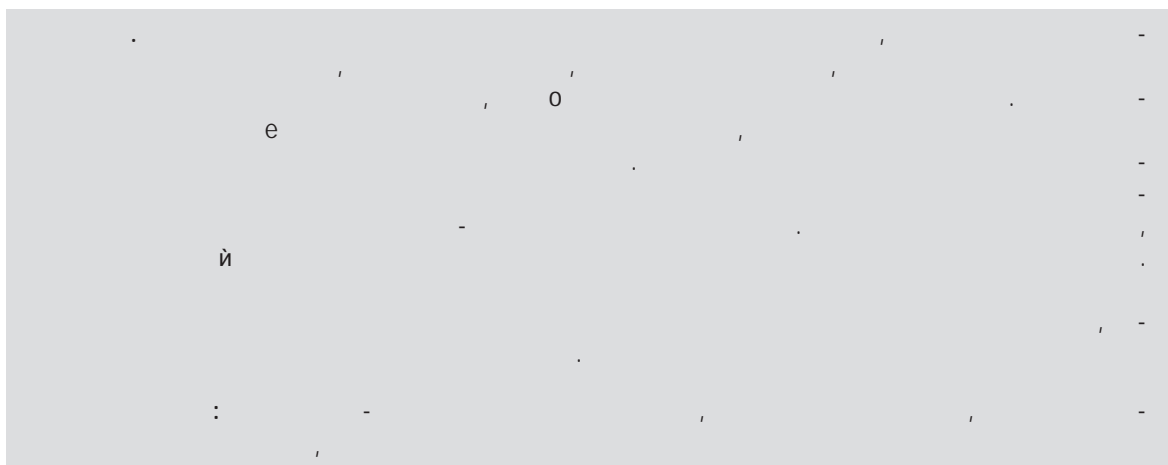
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„THE EGG OR THE HEN“ – TACHYCARDIOMYOPATHY OR CARDIOMYOPATHY WITH TACHYCARDIA – A CLINICAL CASE

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²„Heart and Brain“ Center of Clinical Excellence – Pleven

Abstract. Prolonged and recurrent supraventricular tachycardias, as well as frequent ventricular extrasystoles, bundle branch blocks, ventricular pacing, can cause the development of myocardial dysfunction, provoking dilated cardiomyopathy. Patients seek help only when clinical symptoms are present, although the arrhythmia may have persisted for months or years before their appearance. The diagnostic process is often challenging due to the lack of retrospective patient data and unclear criteria for making the diagnosis of tachycardia-induced cardiomyopathy. Timely recognition, thorough analysis and treatment can lead to partial or complete reversal of development. Due to these facts, we selected a clinical case of a patient with full recovery of cardiac function after life-threatening cardiomyopathy resulting from atrial fibrillation.

Key words: tachycardia-induced cardiomyopathy, atrial fibrillation, congestive heart failure, reversal

ВЪВЕДЕНИЕ

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INTRODUCTION

The clinical presentation of tachycardia-induced cardiomyopathy (TIC) is congestive heart failure (CHF), occurring as a result of an increase in atrial or ventricular rate [2, 3]. Patients seek help

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КЛИНИЧЕН СЛУЧАЙ

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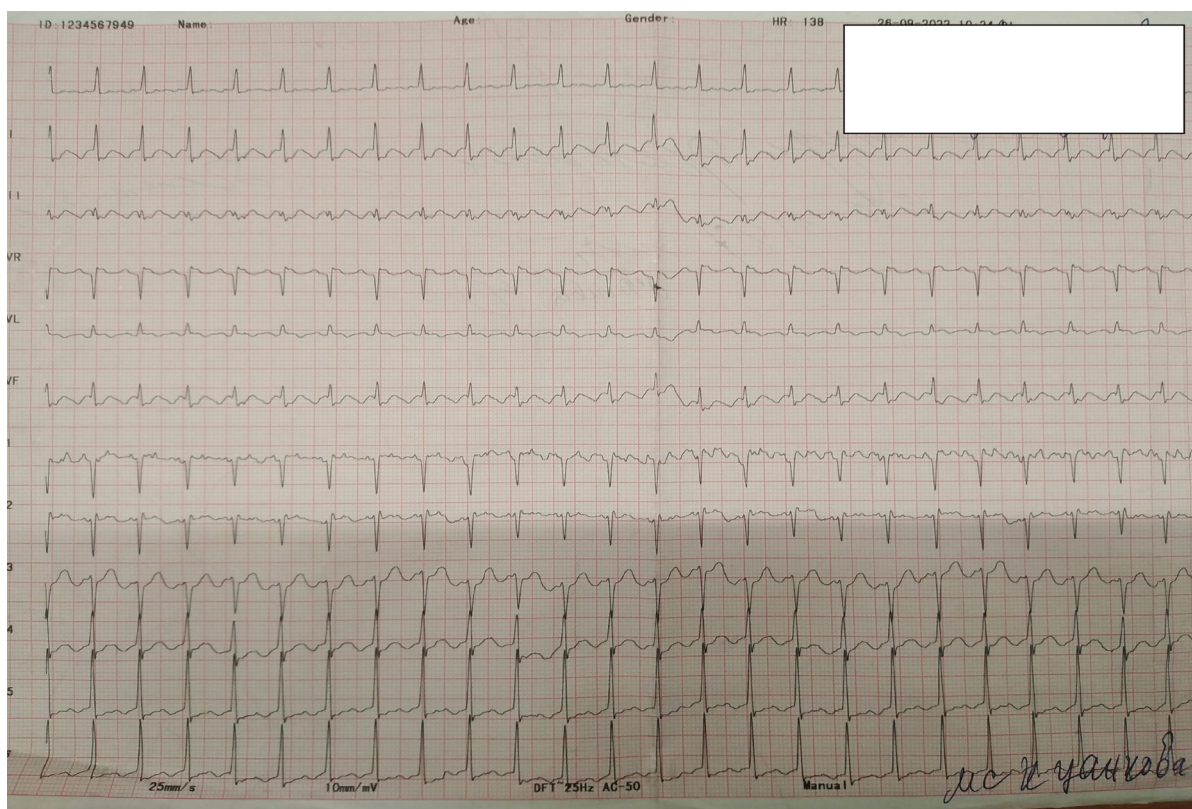
only when clinical symptoms are present, although the arrhythmia may have persisted for months or years before their appearance [1]. The first model of biventricular dysfunction in experimental conditions was presented in the 1960s by Whipple et al. Nowadays, HF, along with diabetes and atrial fibrillation, could be considered the three cardiovascular epidemics of our millennium. Therefore, early diagnosis and treatment of reversible causes of CHF are essential. Given the rapid progression, the difficult treatment of HF in TIC and, accordingly, the need for timely recognition and therapeutic intervention, we chose to present to you a clinical case of a patient with high-frequency atrial flutter (AF), which led to the occurrence of cardiomyopathy (CM).

A CLINICAL CASE

A 57-year-old patient presented for the first time to the cardiology department with complaints of dyspnea of three to four weeks' duration, initially with usual physical exertion, until gradual progression and at rest over the last two days. He noticed swellings on the lower extremities, at first around the ankles and later on the lower legs, as well as abdominal swelling of the same age. 3 days before hospitalization, he visited an outpatient cardiologist, who prescribed bisoprolol 10 mg and digoxin 0.25 mg.

He reported no significant medical history, adverse events, or family history. The objective condition on admission showed a damaged general condition, with dyspnea at rest, respiratory rate – 19-20/min, orthopneic position in bed, pale skin, with jaundice, evidence of cervical venous stasis – 6-10 cm above the collarbones. Vesicular breathing, with small moist rales in the lung bases, tachyrrhythmic heart activity, heart rate – 130/min, muffled heart sounds, arterial pressure (BP) – 100/70 mmHg were found. The abdomen was tense, with percussion data for ascites,

– 3-4
 () –
 2:1,
 II, III, aVF V1 (.1).
 liver – 3-4 cm below the costal arch. Swellings were observed on the lower legs, with preserved pulsations of the peripheral arteries.
 An electrocardiogram (ECG) performed showed a typical AF with 2:1 block, with negative F-waves in II, III, aVF and positive in V1 (Figure 1).



. 1. 12-

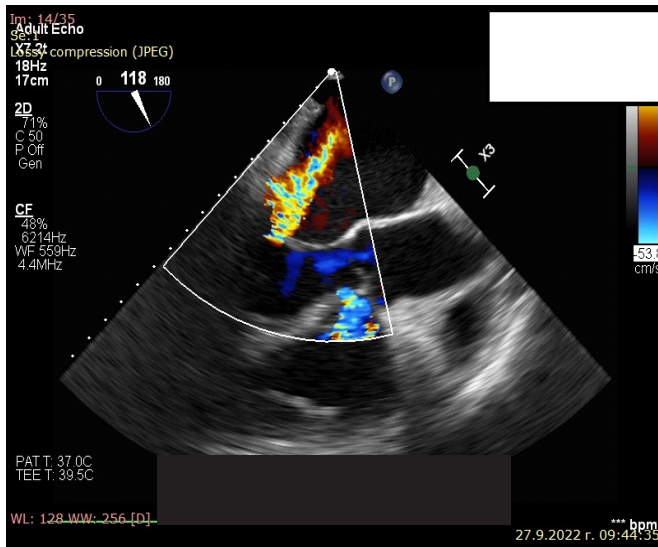
2:1

Fig. 1. 12-lead ECG of the patient with typical atrial flutter with 2:1 block

() –
 () –
 (/) – 55/43 mm,
 (/) – 160/88 ml,
 () – 28%,
 () – 11 mm,
 () – 11 mm,
 () – 55 mm
 At the next stage, echocardiography (transthoracic and transesophageal) was performed with the following data: left ventricle (LV) – dilated and remodeled, with impaired kinetics and severe systolic dysfunction, end-diastolic/end-systolic size (EDD/ESD) – 55/43 mm, end-diastolic/ end-systolic volume (EDV/ESV) – 160/88 ml, ejection fraction (EF) – 28%, interventricular septum (IVS) – 11 mm, left ventricular posterior wall (LVPW) – 11 mm, moderate mitral, high-grade tricuspid regurgitation, pulmonary hypertension at rest (mean pulmonary artery pressure – 55 mmHg),

Hg),
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() 2
V max – 24 m/s (.2).

dilated atria, dilated right heart cavities, reduced systolic function of the right ventricle (RV), left atrial (LA) appendage – dilated, spontaneous echocontrast 2 degree, V max – 24 cm/s (Figure 2).



. 2.

Fig. 2. Transesophageal echocardiography with evidence of moderate mitral regurgitation

: ASAT – 38.5 U/L, ALAT – 35.5 U/L,
– 150 g/L, – 96 umol/L, INR – 1.54,
(T) –

Laboratory tests showed AST – 38.5 U/L, ALAT – 35.5 U/L, hemoglobin – 150 g/L, creatinine – 96 umol/L, INR – 1.54, thyroid-stimulating hormone (TSH) – normal.

From the initial data obtained, it was concluded that this was a patient with the picture of total heart failure on the background of atrial flutter with block 2:1, with sonographic evidence of dilated cardiac cavities, severe left ventricular systolic dysfunction, moderate mitral and high-grade tricuspid regurgitation. At this stage, a concilium was held, and two hypotheses were discussed in terms of differential diagnosis. One was for TIC, where termination of the arrhythmia would lead to recovery of cardiac function. The other one was for primary heart muscle and/or the valvular apparatus disease, in the course of which the tachycardia developed. In this thesis, attempts to restore rhythm would have no significant effect on maintaining sinus rhythm and rate control and would only expose the patient to additional risk of anesthesia and cardioversion. Because of the clear onset of development, the patient's good functional capacity, and

mg 24)
40 mg

2 5 mg
(1200

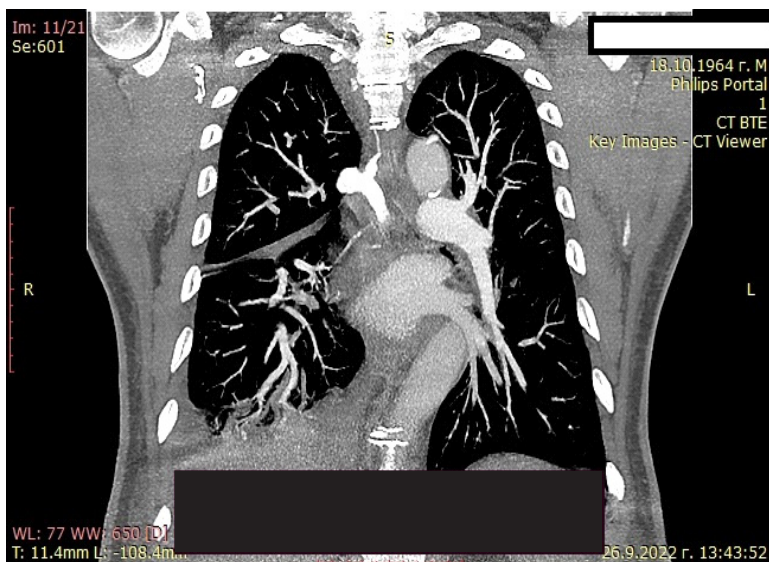
3

mmHg - 130 /min, - 90-95

()

(. 3).

- the absence of previous complaints, we considered the first diagnosis more likely. Medical therapy was started with bisoprolol 2 times 5 mg orally, intravenous infusion of amiodarone (1200 mg in 24 hours) to control the ventricular response, furosemide 3 times 40 mg intravenously daily and a prophylactic dose of anticoagulant subcutaneously to prevent embolic complications. Against the background of this therapy, on the second day, there was a gradual worsening of shortness of breath at rest, without dynamics of the heart rate – about 130 beats/min, BP – 90-95 mmHg systole. Given the critical deterioration of the patient, the lack of response to the applied therapy and the suspicion of a thrombus in the LA appendage, a contrast computed tomography (CT) of the lung was performed with the following results – right-sided pleural effusion, ascites, LA appendage – no thrombosis was visualized (Figure 3).



. 3.
Fig. 3. Contrast-enhanced CT scan of the chest

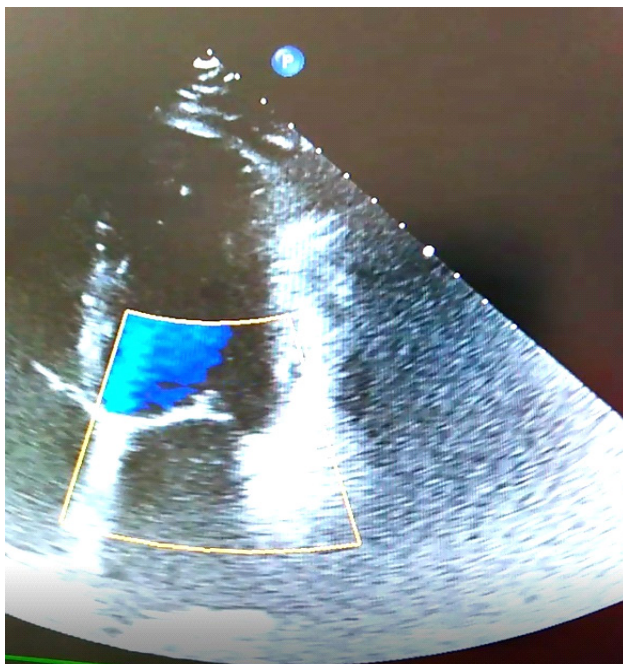
- Despite the sonographic description of the left atrial appendage, the lack of response to drug therapy, the worsening condition, and the contrast-enhanced CT data led to the decision by the cardiology team for synchronized electrocardioversion with short-term intravenous anesthesia. With a 50 J biphasic direct current shock, the patient recovered sinus rhythm. Within the next five days, there was a significant improvement in the condition, with no shortness of breath at rest, including when lying down, and a

2

– 53% (. 4).

Обсъждане

[4].
100 . /min,



- reduction in edema syndrome. Coronary angiography was performed in order to evaluate the coronary anatomy and possible ischemic genesis of CM – without evidence of significant stenoses. At the control examination after 2 weeks, the patient was without complaints, in sinus rhythm. From echocardiography – significantly reduced volumes of heart cavities, EF of LV – 53% (Figure 4). At the next stage, the patient underwent electrophysiological examination and ablation of the cavo-tricuspid isthmus. At subsequent control examinations – with full restoration of normal pump function and cavity dimensions.

DISCUSSION

TIC is commonly seen in patients without structural heart damage, but it can also contribute to worsening left ventricular function in the setting of underlying heart disease [4]. Occurs with a heart rate above 100 beats/min and may develop over months and years. The higher the heart rate, the faster the manifestation. The underlying heart damage, the type of tachycardia,

Fig. 4. Follow-up transthoracic echocardiography of the patient 2 weeks after restoration of sinus rhythm

й.

[4, 5].
625

[6].

(), 10 2,7%,
– 25%,
– 9 34% [7].

[7, 8].

[7, 9].
(3 7)

[10].

[11].

й

[7, 11].

(. 1) [12].

the patient's age and comorbidity are factors that shorten the time to the appearance of TIC, which also happens to be an understudied disease [4, 5]. Dongua et al studied a cohort of 625 patients referred for radiofrequency ablation for tachyarrhythmia, of whom 2.7% had TIC [6]. There is evidence that the frequency of cardiomyopathies due to atrial fibrillation (AF) is between 10 and 50%, of atrial flutter – 25%, of ventricular tachycardia – from 9 to 34% [7]. TICs occur more often in the course of supraventricular tachycardias compared to ventricular ones. [7, 8] It is still unknown why some patients develop TIC as a result of prolonged tachycardia, while others tolerate it and maintain normal systolic function for a long period of time [7, 9]. In the early phase of TIC development (in the first 3 to 7 days), a rapid heart rate is observed, leading to left ventricular dilatation and a decrease in LV ejection fraction. By the second week, the described changes include increased pulmonary capillary pressure, systemic vascular resistance and central venous pressure [10]. Increased calcium accumulation and overutilization of cellular energy have been suggested to underlie the mechanisms of TIC onset. All these processes lead to the occurrence of HF and the development of myocardial remodeling [11]. Although clear diagnostic criteria for TIC have not been established, the detection of pathologic tachyarrhythmia or persistent ventricular ectopy in the setting of unexplained cardiomyopathy is believed to be essential for staging. On the other hand, it remains a clinical challenge to clarify whether the arrhythmia is a cause or a consequence of cardiomyopathy [7, 11]. Gupta and co-authors propose clearer diagnostic criteria for defining a CM as tachycardia-induced (Table 1) [12].

Клинични случаи / Case reports

1. [12]

1.	
2.	
3.	< 5.5 cm
4.	1 6
5.	

Table 1. Diagnostic criteria for TIC according to Gupta et al [12]

Steps	Clinical signs or outcome of the disease
1.	Lack of data on non-ischemic CM such as hypertrophic, alcoholic, as a result of the use of opiates, etc.
2.	Absence of LV hypertrophy
3.	Relatively normal LV dimensions such as EDD < 5.5cm
4.	Recovery of LV function after achieving rate control, radiofrequency ablation or cardioversion within 1 and 6 months
5.	Rapid decrease in LV ejection fraction after recurrence of tachycardia in patients with restored LV function

NT-proBNP,

[13].

[14].

AV

14

35,4% 45,8%. [7, 15]

Cardiac imaging provides valuable information for distinguishing TIC from idiopathic CHD. End-diastolic dimensions and volumes are smaller in TIC. Furthermore, monitoring of natriuretic peptides, in particular NT-proBNP, may aid in the differential diagnosis of these two conditions. There was a significant decrease in the peptide after successful electrocardioversion of AF in reversible CM [13]. In the described clinical case, the data on general cardiac dilatation are impressive, but after rhythm control is achieved, recovery of normal volumes and dimensions is observed.

It is believed that atrial fibrillation is one of the most common causes of TIC and its treatment is guided by the European recommendations. They include recognition of the possible causes of tachyarrhythmia, treatment of HF, frequency and rhythm control, prevention of embolic complications [14]. Studies indicate that the restoration of sinus rhythm plays a key role in the treatment of TIC, which could be achieved by medication, AV-node ablation, pulmonary vein isolation. It was found that at 14-month follow-up, the indicated treatment methods resulted in an improvement in LV ejection fraction from 35.4% to 45.8% [7, 15]. In the described clinical case, we assumed that it was a TIC that occurred

- [16]. as a result of high-frequency AF, in which the behavior is like that in atrial fibrillation. Due to the lack of effect of the applied drug therapy, in the conditions of worsening HF, synchronized low-energy direct current cardioversion was undertaken. (Class I of recommendation, level of evidence – B). In the presented case, the decision to perform electrocardioversion was extremely difficult due to the echocardiographic data of probable thrombosis in the left atrial appendage, which was rejected by the performed contrast-enhanced chest CT scan. Subsequent therapy in the patient was performed by means of catheter ablation of the cavo-tricuspid isthmus, which according to European recommendations is necessary in patients with persistent AF or in the presence of suppressed LV systolic function due to TIC. (Class I of recommendation, level of evidence – B) [16]. The described ECG-changes for a typical AF in the selected clinical case correlate with the results of the electrophysiological study, which confirm that the cavo-tricuspid isthmus is part of the macroenteric circuit creating this atrial tachyarrhythmia and its ablation was performed [17].
- [17]. The prognosis for TIC is favorable if rhythm or rate control is achieved. It depends on two factors – the frequency of the arrhythmia itself and its duration [18]. The age of the patients also has an effect on the recovery of ventricular function. Research shows that the most significant improvement is achieved within 1 month after terminating the tachyarrhythmia. Full recovery of ventricular function has been described in about a year [7, 19]. Studies in animal models indicate that despite apparent recovery of ventricular function, persistent microstructural changes are found. Therefore, when a new arrhythmia appears, a faster deterioration of LV function is observed [2, 20].
- [19]. The key in the case presented by us is the decision to restore the rhythm against the background of a progressively worsening condition of the patient

- based on the thesis that it is TIC, which is an etiological treatment. The favorable course of development and the complete recovery of the patient subsequently confirm the correctness of the decision made. Accepting the opposite hypothesis of primary CM and delaying rhythm control therapy would have potentially fatal consequences.

Изводи

CONCLUSIONS

TIC is a dilated cardiomyopathy that undergoes partial or complete reversal. Timely diagnosis and treatment would prevent serious complications for patients, including sudden cardiac death. The doctor is always left with the doubt – which is the root cause – whether the arrhythmia or an underlying CM. The criteria for TIC are not yet generalised, and there are insufficient randomized trials in this area. This calls for more in-depth research in the future follow-up of patients with TIC.

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