



The Vein of Henle Revisited

Lemuel Pran^{1,2}  · Shanta Bajoo² · Shravan Teelucksingh³ · Dilip Dan¹ · Ravi Maharaj^{1,2}

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Dear editor,

I have read the articles entitled *Surgical Anatomy of the Superior Mesenteric Vessels Related to Pancreaticoduodenectomy a Systemic review and Meta-Analysis* and the response to the letter to the editor *The Vein of Belcher Revisited*.^{1–3} These articles highlight the importance, in addition to the utility of the Vein of Belcher; however, another important structure for which consideration should be given is the gastrocolic trunk. The vein of Henle, commonly referred to as the gastrocolic trunk, was first described in 1868.⁴ Since then, there has been an increasing body of literature surrounding this peculiar structure, which has delineated its anatomy.^{5,6} Consequently, knowledge of the vein of Henle, its clinical application when considering gastric and pancreatic surgical procedures, is now commonplace.

There are multiple variations of the tributaries which comprise the vein of Henle; however, it consistently drains into the superior mesenteric vein (SMV).^{4–6} Hence, obstruction of the SMV will inadvertently result in dilation of this vein. As such, the authors' wish to highlight this subtle finding which can indicate involvement of the SMV when considering

resectability of a pancreatic head tumour. Due to a high rate of unresectability for pancreatic head adenocarcinoma, which on imaging was initially found to be resectable, the modern-day surgeon should employ all the necessary tools to avoid unnecessary morbidity. The prominence of the gastrocolic trunk can be identified on preoperative imaging or at the time of surgical resection as shown in Fig. 1. Documentation of this sign can prompt closer inspection and initiate planning for vein reconstruction.

Additionally, the gastrocolic trunk can also be used as a landmark when performing a pancreaticoduodenectomy. A key step in this procedure is the identification and dissection of the SMV, which serves as the “gateway” to the tunnel. The vein of Henle once identified can be followed proximally leading to the infra-pancreatic SMV.

In summary, knowledge of the vein of Henle anatomy aids in the infra-pancreatic dissection during a Whipple's procedure. Furthermore, its prominence on preoperative imaging can be used as a marker increasing suspicion of venous involvement and therefore questions resectability when considering pancreatic head malignancy.

✉ Lemuel Pran
pran1919@hotmail.com

¹ Department of Clinical Surgical Sciences, Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex, University of the West Indies, Champs Fleurs, Trinidad and Tobago

² Department of Surgery, Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex, Champs Fleurs, Trinidad and Tobago

³ Department of Radiology, Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex, Champs Fleurs, Trinidad and Tobago



Fig. 1 Showing prominent gastrocolic trunk (green arrow)

Compliance with Ethical Standards

Conflict of Interest The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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