



Image of the Month

Upper gastrointestinal bleeding due to Gurrivits' syndrome

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1. Case description

A 65-year-old female patient, with a history of alcohol abuse and malnutrition, was referred to our department following an episode of acute bloody emesis, dark stools and anemia (hemoglobin level 8.2 g/dl, lower limit of normal 12.0 g/dl). No caustic agents were ingested. Esophagogastroduodenoscopy revealed a diffuse black discoloration of the esophagus (Fig. 1 A), covering the entire length of the esophagus with a distinctive demarcation at the esophago-gastric junction (Fig. 1 B), findings compatible with Gurrivits' syndrome.

Also known as acute esophageal necrosis or 'black esophagus', this rare endoscopic entity is characterized by a black esophageal discoloration, with signs of upper gastrointestinal bleeding in 70% of cases [1]. Although the exact pathophysiology remains poorly understood, risk factors include cardiovascular disease, hemodynamic instability, hypoxemia and as illustrated in our patient, renal insufficiency, diabetes mellitus, malnutrition and alcohol abuse. Gurrivits' syndrome should be viewed as a poor prognostic factor, as it is associated with an overall mortality of 31.8% [1].

Unfortunately, during admission the patient suffered an episode of hypotension and respiratory failure. Due to extreme weakness, severe malnutrition and on specific request of the patient and family, a conservative approach was taken. After palliative care was initiated, the patient succumbed 36 h later. This case illustrates the typical risk factors for Gurrivits' syndrome and underlines the significant mortality risk associated with this disorder.

Conflict of interest

None declared.

Author statement

MB was responsible for the literary search, initial drafts of the manuscript, daily care of the patient and final revision of the paper. PB provided critical clinical insights and revised the final manuscript. PC supervised patient care. AVO was responsible for the endoscopic diagnosis, images and critically revised the final manuscript.

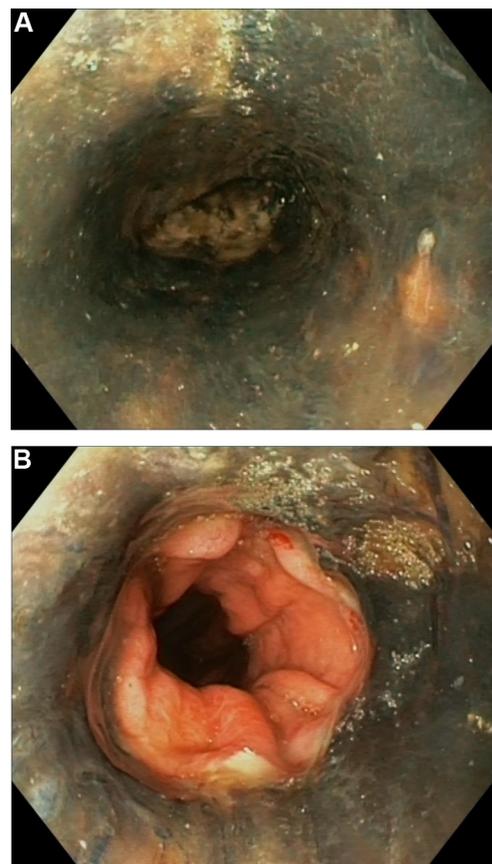


Fig. 1. (A) Endoscopic view mid-esophagus, showing a diffuse, black discoloration covering the entire length of the esophageal wall. (B) Endoscopic view at the esophago-gastric junction, revealing a distinct demarcation with an abrupt transition to normal gastric mucosa.

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Reference

- [1] Gurrivits GE, Shapsis A, Lau N, Gualtieri N, Robilotti JG. Acute esophageal necrosis: a rare syndrome. *J Gastroenterol* 2007;42(1):29–38.

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