Hematochezia due to a renal cell carcinoma metastasis to the rectum: A case report and review of the literature

Evan S. Dellon, M.D.,* Lisa M. Gangarosa, M.D.*
*Department of Medicine, University of North Carolina School of Medicine, Chapel Hill, N.C.
Correspondence: Evan S. Dellon, M.D. University of North Carolina School of Medicine. Division of Gastroenterology and Hepatology, CB #7080. Bioinformatics Bldg, Rm 1140. 130 Mason Farm Rd. Chapel Hill, NC 27599-7080. Phone: 919-966-2514. Fax: 919-966-6842. E-mail: edellon@unche.unc.edu

Received for publication: January 31th, 2006.
Accepted for publication: July 17th, 2006.

SUMMARY. While primary tumors of the GI tract are a frequent cause of gastrointestinal bleeding, metastatic lesions to the bowel uncommonly present with hematochezia, and rectal involvement is particularly rare. We describe the case of a 70-year-old man with an exceedingly late recurrence of renal cell carcinoma who presented with hematochezia due to a metastasis in the rectum. This is the first report to include both endoscopic and endoscopic ultrasound images of such a lesion. In the correct clinical setting, metastatic disease to the rectum should be included on the differential diagnosis of lower gastrointestinal bleeding.

Key words: Renal cell carcinoma, GI bleeding, metastasis, endoscopic ultrasound.

CASE REPORT

A 70-year-old man was admitted to the hospital with painless hematochezia and a hematocrit of 26%. His past medical history was notable for renal cell carcinoma (RCC) diagnosed at the age of 42. He underwent a left nephrectomy, and did well until the age of 68. At that time, however, he experienced vertigo and was found to have a cerebellar lesion which proved to be metastatic RCC. Further staging revealed tumor in the right lung with mediastinal lymphadenopathy; the remaining kidney was normal. The patient was treated with interleukin-2 and interferon alpha. He initially responded, but three months prior to the current admission he developed anemia with occult blood detected in his stool. No significant abnormalities were seen on colonoscopy. On EGD, a four cm, ulcerated, oozing mass was found in the duodenum. Biopsies were consistent with metastatic RCC, radiation therapy was instituted, and another course of immunotherapy was prescribed.
DISCUSSION

This paper describes a patient with an exceedingly late recurrence of renal cell carcinoma manifest by widespread metastatic disease, including lesions in the GI tract. It is the first reported characterization of a rectal RCC lesion by EUS. Renal cell carcinoma is often considered to be one of the great medical mimics because of the wide variety of ways in which it may present. In this case, the patient’s disease mimicked a stroke as well as two types of GI bleeding.

While it is uncommon for any tumor to metastasize to the GI tract, it is more common with melanoma, ovarian, and bladder carcinoma; RCC is only rarely found to spread there. There are, however, several case reports describing GI tract involvement in RCC. Some are by direct extension from the kidney or IVC, though most go to the duodenum, stomach, or pancreas. Less frequently reported is RCC metastasizing to the colon and causing GI bleeding, either as an initial presentation of RCC or as a harbinger of recurrence. There has been one previously described case of RCC metastasizing to the rectum and presenting as rectal bleeding, though the patient described proceeded directly to surgery, and no endoscopic or sonographic images were reported.

Endoscopic ultrasound is useful for characterizing rectal lesions, though it is most commonly used to stage rectal adenocarcinoma. While EUS has not been reported to be specifically applied in the few reports of RCC lesions metastatic to the GI tract, it has been used on several occasions to characterize and access medastinal and pancreatic metastases for diagnostic purposes. These lesions were described as round and well circumscribed, but ranged from hypoechoic to hyperechoic depending on the features of the surrounding tissue. When an RCC is still located in the kidney, it is often hypoechoic to isoechoic compared to the surrounding renal parenchyma.

In conclusion, we present a case of a patient with a rare cause of hematochezia: metastatic RCC to the rectum. It is important to consider the possibility of a metastatic lesion to the GI tract as a cause of GI bleeding. While reports of RCC involving the GI tract have been published, this is the first to include an endosonographic image of the lesion. While a range of echogenecities has been found for RCC, we found that RCC appears hyperechoic in the rectum.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We would like to thank the Department of Pathology of the University of North Carolina School of Medicine for providing the photomicrographs included in this report.

REFERENCES