

A Nursing Experience of a Patient Diagnosed with Esophageal Perforation following Anterior Cervical Spine Surgery for Cervical Spondylosis

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Objectives: We would like to present a case with lethal complication of esophageal perforation after anterior cervical spine fusion for cervical spondylosis and to inform the medical staff the symptoms and signs of such life-threatening condition, which may be masked by administration of steroids.

Results: This was a 57-year-old male who underwent anterior cervical spine surgery due to cervical spondylosis. After the operation, no obvious wound infection was found, but he complained of easy choking and difficulty swallowing liquid diet, nevertheless, he was discharged after achieving symptomatic relief via the use of steroids. He experienced sore throat, local heat and dysphagia a few hours later and returned to emergency room. Imaging studies suggested of esophageal perforation with deep neck infection. He was immediately readmitted for esophageal repair, but leakage was found at the site of repair on the eighth postoperative day and rotational muscle flap coverage was required. With addition of adequate drainage and nutritional support, his condition gradually improved and he was discharged 41 days after rehospitalization.

Discussion: When a patient who has been taking steroids continues to experience dysphagia or burning throat pain after anterior cervical spine surgery, strong consideration must be given to other rare postoperative complication such as esophageal perforation. If such complication is not identified and treated promptly, the patient may potentially face a life-threatening condition. Esophageal perforation is suspected by presentation of air around the surgical site on plain radiographs and definite diagnosis can be confirmed through computed tomography scan. This case study provides description of patient's clinical manifestations, diagnosis and course of treatment. We hope that this article will give a better understanding of the possible postoperative complications and the care needed for patients following anterior cervical spine fusion, facilitating early recognition and prompt treatment of the problems.

Biography

Jhih-Yu Lin graduated from the medical college of Yuanpei University of Medical Technology, Taiwan in 2005 and has received full clinical nursing practice training at Taipei Tzu Chi Hospital. She gained her master's degree at National Taipei University of Nursing and Health Sciences, Taiwan in 2015 and held the academic title of the lecturer in 2018. She is currently working at Taipei Tzu Chi Hospital, Buddhist Tzu Chi Medical Foundation as the head nurse of nursing department and teaching at school of medicine in at St. Mary's Medicine, Nursing and Management College, Sanxing Township, Yilan, Taiwan. Shuo-Suei Hung graduated from the medical college of National Taiwan University in 1995 and has received full orthopedic surgical training at the Chang Gung Memorial Hospital in Taiwan. He gained his PhD degree in the Department of Mechanical Engineering at Chang Gung University in 2011 and held the academic title of assistant professor in 2013. He is currently working at Taipei Tzu Chi hospital, Buddhist Tzu Chi Medical Foundation as the chief of orthopedic department and teaching at school of medicine in Tzu Chi University.

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