

A Case of Pleural Effusion in IBD: extraintestinal presentation, treatment complication, or something else?

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Introduction

Inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) is systemic disease that manifest not only in the gastrointestinal tract but also in the extraintestinal organs (mostly involving the skin, eyes, joints, hepatobiliary system and rarely the pulmonary, cardiac and nerovus system).

Case presentation

A 58-year-old male is being followed up in our IBD outpatient clinic due to ulcerative colitis.

He was diagnosed with ulcerative proctosigmoiditis at the age of 42 and was treated intermittently with mesalazine.

At the age of 40, he was also diagnosed with sarcoidosis, for which he was treated with systemic corticosteroids and methotrexate.

In 2024, he was hospitalized in our hospital due to an acute flare of ulcerative pancolitis. At the same time, pulmonologists ruled out latent tuberculosis and active sarcoidosis. Treatment with systemic corticosteroids in tapering doses was initiated, followed by biological therapy with infliximab, after which the symptoms of ulcerative colitis subsided.

During follow-up visits, the patient began reporting progressive dyspnea and chest pain. A CT angiography of the pulmonary arteries was performed, which ruled out pulmonary embolism. A small left-sided pleural effusion was seen, along with enlarged lymph nodes and infiltrates in the apical regions of the lungs. He was re-hospitalized in the pulmonary department, where cytological analysis confirmed a lymphocytic pleural effusion and tuberculosis was excluded.

During further outpatient follow-up, the patient reported additional symptoms: fatigue, dizziness, more frequent bowel movements, pain in small joints, and a facial rash. Laboratory results showed worsening kidney function, mildly elevated CRP, abnormal liver function tests consistent with hepatocellular damage, a marked increase in fecal calprotectin, and low infliximab levels. On follow-up colonoscopy, erythema of the rectal mucosa, scarring from previous inflammation, and pseudopolyps were observed.

The patient was re-discussed at the IBD multidisciplinary team meeting due to ineffective treatment. A switch to a JAK inhibitor was recommended. Due to the newly described symptoms, serological testing for SLE and a rheumatology consultation were also advised. Diagnostics are ongoing...

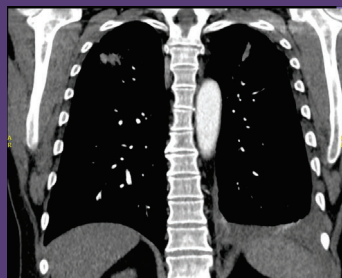


Figure 1: A CT scan showing left side pleural effusion

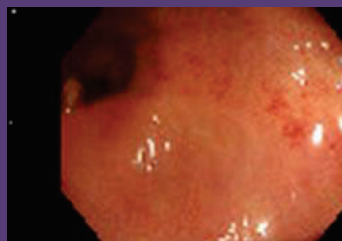


Figure 2: endoscopy showing active proctitis

| Hematološke preiskave | | Biokemične preiskave I | |
|-----------------------|--------|------------------------|------|
| WBC | 11.000 | Urea | 7,53 |
| Hb | 124 | Kreatinina | 0,47 |
| Hct | 37,1 | Gljukoza | 5,1 |
| MCV | 106,9 | Ureaz | 1,1 |
| MCH | 103,2 | Alb | 4,2 |
| MCHC | 96,5 | Alb/cre | 0,08 |
| RBCW | 102,4 | Alb/cre | 0,08 |
| RDW | 13,4 | Alb/cre | 0,08 |
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