Risk Factors of Acute Pancreatitis in Oral Double Balloon Enteroscopy

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Summary: Double balloon enteroscopy (DBE) was introduced 15 years ago. The complications of diagnostic DBE are rare, acute pancreatitis is most redoubtable one (incidence about 0.3%). Hyperamylasemia after DBE seems to be a rather common condition respectively. The most probable cause seems to be a mechanical straining of the pancreas. We tried to identify patients in a higher risk of acute pancreatitis after DBE. We investigated several laboratory markers before and after DBE (serum cathepsin B, lactoferrin, E-selectin, SPINK 1, procalcitonin, S100 proteins, alfa-1-antitrypsin, hs-CRP, malondialdehyde, serum and urine amylase and serum lipase). Serum amylase and lipase rose significantly with the maximum 4 hours after DBE. Serum cathepsin and procalcitonin decreased significantly 4 hours after DBE compared to healthy controls and patients values before DBE. Either serum amylase or lipase 4 hours after DBE did not correlate with any markers before DBE. There was a trend for an association between the number of push-and-pull cycles and procalcitonin and urine amylase 4 hours after DBE; between procalcitonin and alfa-1-antitrypsin, cathepsin and hs-CRP; and between E-selectin and malondialdehyde 4 hours after DBE. We found no laboratory markers determinative in advance those patients in a higher risk of acute pancreatitis after DBE.

Keywords: Acute pancreatitis; Deep enteroscopy; Device assisted endoscopy; Double balloon enteroscopy; Hyperamylasemia; Small intestinal disorders

Introduction

Double balloon endoscopy (DBE) is a method of enteroscopy that was introduced in 2001 (1–3).

The system consists of enteroscope and over-tube; both have a soft balloon at their tips. Both balloons can be alternately inflated and deflated by an air balloon-pump controller. DBE is based on a new insertion technique in which these two balloons are operated in combination, and the endoscope is inserted while simultaneously shortening the intestine.

Acute pancreatitis is the most feared complication in oral DBE. Despite a 15-year experience, the causal reason of acute pancreatitis remains uncertain. There are many hypotheses explaining this fact: direct trauma of the pancreas caused by the pressure of an endoscope against the vertebral column, the disorders in microcirculation during the procedure, increase in intraluminal duodenal pressure during enteroscopy caused by inflation of the two balloons, reflux of duodenal fluids into the pancreatic duct, timing of the procedure and others. We published a prospective study concerning this risk (Kopáčová et al. Gastrointest Endosc 2007; 66(6): 1133–1138) (4). In our contemporary project we continue in priority investigation of known or supposed protective and risk factors (dehydration, oral DBE, time of procedure, number of cycles, the depth of intubation, CO2 insufflation) in correlation with serum and urine amylase, lipase and hs-CRP and some possible plasmatic markers of a higher risk of acute pancreatitis (malondialdehyde, procalcitonin, S 100 proteins, cathepsin B, pancreatic secretory trypsin inhibitor (PSTI); also known as serine protease inhibitor Kazal-type 1 (SPINK 1) or tumour-associated trypsin inhibitor (TATI), lactoferrin, E-selectin and alfa-1-antitrypsin (A1AT). Our project assumes the outcome of possibility to identify high risk patients for DBE-associated acute pancreatitis.

As DBE is a lengthy procedure, a large volume of air is usually insufflated leading to significant distension of the small bowel. Indeed, one of the main technical challenges of DBE is the formation of distended bowel loops and acute angulations with increasing amounts of gas intra-luminally. Carbon dioxide (CO2), unlike air, is rapidly absorbed from the bowel. Bowel insufflation with CO2, instead of air, enhances patients comfort and decreases the need for sedation.
We have used CO₂ insufflation in DBE procedures regularly since 2007; since we had no complications with hyperinflation, the comfort of the patient rapidly increased and this type of insufflation is helpful for easier and deeper insertion of the scope, because the absorption of CO₂ is 150-times faster than absorption of air in the bowel. A randomised, double-blind trial showed that insufflation with CO₂ is safe, reduces patient discomfort, and significantly improves intubation depth (8).

A combination of water with simethicone is used routinely to do away with bubbles in the intestine. During withdrawal of the endoscope and during therapeutic interventions, spasmylotics might improve visualisation of the small-bowel mucosa by reducing motility of the small bowel (5, 6).

A venous access is obtained before the procedure. All patients are monitored during the procedure; oxygen saturation, heart rate, and blood pressure are monitored. Intravenous crystalloids are administered during DBE. Conscious sedation is thought to be sufficient for DBE (5, 6). It seems to be much better in DBE in comparison with general anaesthesia according to our experience. Abdominal pain of the patient is a very important warning signal, and it is necessary to terminate the procedure immediately in that case. Intense pain may be a sign of inadequate pressure on the pancreas and poses a high risk of post-DBE pancreatitis (4, 7, 9, 10). We use small intravenous repetitive doses of midazolam and pentazocine for conscious sedation (batch-wise).

The duration of the procedure and the discomfort for the patient caused by oral passage of the over-tube require deep analgo-sedation. The cost of the procedure is high (the patient caused by oral passage of the over-tube requires therapeutic or diagnostic endoscope was based on the indication. Over-tube was used in all cases. The conscious sedation was used (midazolam, pentazocine). Crystalloids were given intravenously during the DBE (depending on the time of the procedure 500–1,000 mL F1/1; 500 mL per hour).

Blood and urine samples were collected before the DBE procedure and 4 and 24 hours after the DBE. Besides standard routine investigations (amylases, lipase, hs-CRP), several laboratory markers were also investigated, their list is provided below. Abdominal pain was evaluated using a three-step scale (no pain, moderate and significant pain).

**Hs-CRP** was quantified using imunoturbidimetry on Roche/Hitachi MODULAR P (Roche, Germany), detection range 0–5 mg/L.

**Malondialdehyde** was measured using spectrophotometry – spectrophotometer Secomam S.500P (TrigzonPlus, Czech Republic), detection range 0.26–1.07 µmol/L.

**Procalcitonin** was assessed by means of enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay kit (ELISA, USCN Life Science Inc., USA), detection range 31.2–2,000 pg/mL.

**S 100 proteins** were quantified using electrochemiluminescence (ECLIA) – sandwich reaction on automatic immunoanalyzer Elecsys 2010 (Roche, Germany), detection range < 0.105 µg/L.

**Cathepsin B** was measured using enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay kit (ELISA, USCN Life Science Inc., USA), detection range 0.312–20 ng/mL.

**Serine peptidase inhibitor Kazal type 1 (SPINK 1)** was quantified using enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay kit (ELISA, USCN Life Science Inc., USA), detection range 1.56 – 100 ng/mL.

**Lactoferrin** was analyzed by means of enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay kit (ELISA, USCN Life Science Inc., USA), detection range 0.312–20 ng/mL.

**E-selectin** was measured using enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay kit (ELISA, USCN Life Science Inc., USA), detection range 39–2,500 pg/mL.

**Alfa-1-antitrypsin (A1AT)** using immunoturbidimetry on Roche/Hitachi MODULAR P (Roche, Germany), detection range 0.9–2.0 g/L.

Laboratory markers were also investigated in a control group of clinically healthy volunteers without DBE.

**Study approval and confidentiality of data obtained**

The project received a full approval from the local Ethics Committee (joint committee of the University Teaching Hospital and Faculty of Medicine at Hradec Králové). For all data obtained, all personal identification information was deleted in compliance with the laws for the protection of confidentiality of the Czech Republic.

**Results**

Data was processed by means of statistical software for these analyses (SigmaStat; Jandel Corp., Erkrath, Germany), using descriptive statistics, paired t-test, Mann-Whitney rank sum test and Pearson product moment correlation.

We investigated supposed protective and risk factors (rehydration, oral DBE, time of procedure, number of cycles, the depth of intubation, CO₂ insufflation) in correlation with serum and urine amylase, lipase and hs-CRP and some possible plasmatic markers of a higher risk of acute pancreatitis (5–7).
Tab. 1: Laboratory investigations in healthy control volunteers and in patients before and after double balloon enteroscopy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter</th>
<th>Controls</th>
<th>DBE-0h</th>
<th>DBE-4h</th>
<th>DBE-24h</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cathepsin B (pg/L)</td>
<td>14.9 ± 20.0</td>
<td>10.1 ± 14.9</td>
<td>7.2 ± 12.9</td>
<td>9.1 ± 14.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lactoferrin (pg/L)</td>
<td>495 ± 413</td>
<td>725 ± 553</td>
<td>708 ± 711</td>
<td>840 ± 824</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-selectin (μg/L)</td>
<td>27433 ± 15861</td>
<td>26865 ± 18721</td>
<td>23274 ± 16465</td>
<td>25973 ± 17074</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPINK 1 (pg/L)</td>
<td>46.7 ± 21.6</td>
<td>43.6 ± 43.7</td>
<td>43.6 ± 52.6</td>
<td>37.7 ± 34.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procalcitonin (μg/L)</td>
<td>71.7 ± 19.4</td>
<td>121.6 ± 118.6</td>
<td>67.6 ± 54.9</td>
<td>92.3 ± 81.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S100 (μg/L)</td>
<td>0.05 ± 0.02</td>
<td>0.05 ± 0.04</td>
<td>0.07 ± 0.08</td>
<td>0.05 ± 0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alfa-1-antitrypsin (g/L)</td>
<td>1.37 ± 0.28</td>
<td>1.63 ± 0.43</td>
<td>1.63 ± 0.43</td>
<td>1.52 ± 0.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hs-CRP (mg/L)</td>
<td>1.16 ± 1.69</td>
<td>3.02 ± 8.90</td>
<td>8.13 ± 14.97</td>
<td>6.15 ± 11.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malondialdehyde (μmol/L)</td>
<td>0.27 ± 0.19</td>
<td>0.34 ± 0.28</td>
<td>0.26 ± 0.17</td>
<td>0.28 ± 0.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serum amylase (μkat/L)</td>
<td>1.02 ± 0.33</td>
<td>0.99 ± 0.37</td>
<td>3.65 ± 2.96</td>
<td>1.80 ± 1.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urine amylase (μkat/L)</td>
<td>0.83 ± 0.87</td>
<td>1.77 ± 1.55</td>
<td>7.41 ± 10.64</td>
<td>4.03 ± 3.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serum lipase (μkat/L)</td>
<td>0.67 ± 0.23</td>
<td>0.72 ± 0.55</td>
<td>4.40 ± 5.86</td>
<td>1.01 ± 1.13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: DBE-0h: investigation before double balloon enteroscopy. DBE-4h: investigation 4 hours after double balloon enteroscopy completed. DBE-24h: investigation 24 hours after double balloon enteroscopy completed.
microcirculation in the pancreas. Our results suggest that DBE does not stimulate proinflammatory cascade.

DBE has been reported as a safe endoscopic technique (13), the number of severe complications being mentioned ranging from 0 to 1.4% (14–16). However, abdominal pain lasting 1–2 days occurred in 9% of patients in one study (17) or even in 20% according to the another one (14). Abdominal discomfort slaking within 72 hours was reported in 50% of patients after a DBE procedure (18).

In some series on DBE, no complications during or after DBE were reported (19–27). But reading these articles carefully, one will find in Pata et al. (25) 13% oral bleeding, 2% broken tooth and 2% respiratory depression due to aspiration. Moreover, some patients in the initial setting of 36 patients developed pancreatic-type abdominal pain and under prospective following 6 of next 48 patients (12.5%) developed acute pancreatitis and another 6 hyperamylasemia (25). Similarly in a large multicentre study of Domagk et al. (26) no adverse events are declared in the abstract, but mean pain one hour after examination on the 100 mm visual scale was 12.2 and mean pain after 24 hours was 2.4 (26). Are there really difference in complication rate be-
tween particular endoscopy units or the difference is only in the investigation of the patient after endoscopy and his/her follow up?

Major (severe) complications such as pancreatitis, bleeding and perforation have been reported in approximately 1% of all diagnostic DBE whereas the complication rate for therapeutic procedures is about 5% (28).

Minor complications are sore throat, oedema of the uvula, and abdominal discomfort. Some casuistic complications were described in the literature: balloon dislocation, segmental enteritis after argon plasma coagulation (29), intestinal necrosis after epinephrine injection (30), paralytic ileus (31) etc. The complication rate of diagnostic procedures is low (0.4–0.8%) according to the literature (32–35). The overall complication rate of therapeutic DBE is about 3–4%. However, difficult therapeutic endoscopic procedures (e.g. resection of large polyps) may increase the risk up to 10% (5, 6, 32–34). The perforation rate is significantly elevated in patients with postsurgical anatomy undergoing diagnostic retrograde DBE examinations (36).

The overall complication rate is reported in about 1.7% of patients in an international multicentre survey in 2,362 DBE procedures. The complications were rated minor in 0.9%, moderate in 0.3% and severe in 0.6% of procedures. The complication rate is significantly higher in therapeutic procedures in comparison with diagnostic ones (4.3% versus 0.8%). An exception to this rule is acute pancreatitis, the most common complication in diagnostic DBE procedures. Acute pancreatitis was reported in 0.3% of DBE (32, 37).

A report from the National German DBE Register showed an overall complication rate of 1.2% in a large series of 3,894 DBE procedures. The incidence of acute pancreatitis was also 0.3% in this report (33, 34).

A publication by May et al. (29) evaluated acute complication rate of DBE in 353 patients. Only therapeutic procedures are evaluated with a complication rate of 3.4%. No acute pancreatitis was reported (29).

On the other hand, a recent prospective study was published by Zepeda-Gómez et al. with incidence of acute pancreatitis of 3% (38). According to Pata et al. pancreatitis after DBE was observed in 12.5% in their series (39).

In general, DBE is associated with a higher complication rate compared with standard endoscopic procedures (36).

A complication of endoscopy is defined as any event that negatively changes the health status of the patient, and that occurs during the 30-day period after the investigation. Complications are usually categorised as minor when requiring up to 3 days of hospitalisation, moderate when requiring 3–10 days and major or severe when requiring more than 10 days of hospitalisation, and/or an endoscopic, radiological or surgical intervention, and/or contribute to the death of the patient (32, 40). Procedure-related mortality is defined as mortality within 30 days of DBE (32).

It is possible categorized into three groups: 1) those common to other endoscopic techniques (perforation, bleeding), 2) related to sedation administered during the procedure (respiratory depression, aspiration, pneumonia) and 3) complications specifically associated with DBE (acute pancreatitis) (5, 6, 28). The complication rate is about 9% for minor complications and less than 1% for major ones (28). The most discussed complication is acute pancreatitis after DBE (35, 37). In diagnostic procedures via the antegrade approach, acute pancreatitis is the most common and most severe complication (5, 6). The very first post-DBE acute pancreatitis was reported by Honda et al. in 2006 (41).

The causal mechanism of post-DBE acute pancreatitis is uncertain; there are several theories in the literature: direct trauma of the pancreas caused by pressure of the endoscope against the vertebral column in the oral procedure, the disorders in microcirculation during the procedure, increase in intraluminal duodenal pressure during the endoscopic procedure caused by inflation of the two balloons, reflux of duodenal fluids into the pancreatic duct leading to acute pancreatitis. No one of these hypotheses brought the total explanation of the pathogenesis (9, 10, 28). Whereas the increase of amylase and lipase levels after DBE occurs in the significant percentage of patients (30–50%) when systematically measured (25, 38, 42), the rate of post-DBE acute pancreatitis is much lower, about 0.2–0.5% (25, 42). Hyperamylasemia and hyperlipasemia are common conditions after DBE. Asymptomatic hyperamylasemia may occur in nearly half of DBE procedures (4, 9, 10, 41, 43–45). The incidence of hyperamylasemia and pancreatitis after single-balloon enteroscopy or spiral enteroscopy seems to be comparable to that after DBE (45–47).

Hyperamylasemia and hyperlipasemia after DBE are usually asymptomatic and do not present the immediate risk factor of acute pancreatitis (9, 10). The only identified factors increasing risk of post-procedure acute pancreatitis are duration of the procedure (i.e. number of push-pull cycles) and interval time between the first and the second inflation of balloons according to some authors (9, 10, 39). Learning curve seems to be another risk factor; about 50 procedures are needed to acquire enough experience (28). We had four cases of acute pancreatitis among our first 267 oral DBE procedures; it was number 24, 50, 57 and 256 in chronological order. Classification system for acute pancreatitis was discussed in our previous paper (10).

Our centre has long-term experience (since 1994) with both push-enteroscopy (48) and intra-operative enteroscopy (10, 49–51). We have never registered acute pancreatitis as a complication of either push-enteroscopy or intra-operative enteroscopy in our setting. However, acute pancreatitis as such a complication of push-enteroscopy, caused by an overtube, was described previously by other authors (52). Acute pancreatitis was even described after uneventful upper and lower gastrointestinal endoscopy (53–55). Blackwood et al. detected asymptomatic hyperamylasemia in 6.6% of patients undergoing gastrointestinal endoscopy (56).

Pelletier et al. (57) studied the prevalence of hyperamylasemia 2 hours and 24 hours after upper gastrointestinal endoscopy in 50 consecutive patients. In the 2-hour sample,
Acute pancreatitis is a feared complication of oral DBE (100 cases of acute pancreatitis have been described in the literature so far).

Acute pancreatitis is the most common severe complication seen after diagnostic oral DBE (complications of therapy itself prevail in therapeutic procedures).

Hyperamylasemia and elevation of pancreatic lipase after DBE seems to be a common condition. Association with acute pancreatitis is supposed to be possible, but not obligatory.

The complication rate of acute pancreatitis is reported at about 0.3% of DBEs according to large studies, almost solely after the oral DBE. Drawbacks and possible bias of those studies are that they are mostly retrospective, a substantial part of DBEs were performed on an outpatient basis and the follow-up of these patients was inadequate.

In all patients with abdominal pain during the procedure and/or after the oral DBE, diagnosis of acute pancreatitis should be considered and treatment should be provided in good time, identically as in post-ERCP pancreatitis.

Intense pain during the procedure may be a sign of inadequate pressure on the pancreas and pose a high risk of post-DBE pancreatitis.

CO2 insufflation during DBE is highly recommended as it prevents over-inflation of the small bowel, however, possible preventive relationship to post-DBE pancreatitis has not been determined yet.

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References


