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Heparin-induced thrombocytopenia and thrombosis in an elderly patient: case report

A 67-year-old woman developed heparin-induced thrombocytopenia and thrombosis (HITT) after administration of heparin.

The woman presented to an emergency department with acute swelling of her left leg. She had received IV heparin [*dosage and duration of treatment not stated*] for a pulmonary embolism 4 days earlier. Heparin therapy had been complicated by decreased haematocrit levels and guaiac positive stools, which had necessitated RBC transfusions; she had also received an inferior vena cava (IVC) filter. On the current examination, significant swelling of both legs was evident, with left-sided predominance. Duplex ultrasound identified an acute thrombus in her left common iliac vein, and CT venography showed IVC thrombosis from the point of the filter through her bilateral popliteal veins. CT angiography revealed a small lower lobe pulmonary embolism. Her platelet count was 59 (132 on admission), and her platelet factor 4 antibody was positive for heparin antibody.

HITT was diagnosed, and the woman's therapy was switched to argatroban. Other treatment modalities included limb elevation and compression. However, she continued experiencing discomfort at rest and was unable to walk. Her IVC was patent superior to the filter on venography, but significant thrombosis was evident inferior to the filter. Rheolytic thrombectomy was then performed under concomitant argatroban therapy, but a significant residual thrombus persisted. Her symptoms and oedema continued, and venous suction thrombectomy was performed with successful recanalisation of the right IVC, and femoral and iliac veins. She required rheolytic thrombectomy for mild residual bilateral iliofemoral thrombi 2 days later, and the IVC filter was retrieved. Her discomfort and swelling significantly improved, she was able to walk on postoperative day 2, and was discharged on aspirin and warfarin. On follow-up 30 days later, she continued to do well and was leading an active lifestyle.

Sakhujia R, et al. Got Thrombus? A Novel Approach to IVC Filter Thrombosis. 60th Annual Scientific Session of the American College of Cardiology : abstr. 2310-7, 2 Apr 2011. Available from: URL: <http://www.cardiosource.org/acc> - USA

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