

Anisakiasis: a growing cause of abdominal pain!

Joana Carmo,¹ Susana Marques,¹ Miguel Bispo,^{1,2} David Serra²

¹Department of Gastroenterology, Hospital Egas Moniz, Centro Hospitalar de Lisboa Ocidental, Lisboa, Portugal
²Department of Gastroenterology, Hospital da Luz, Lisboa, Portugal

Correspondence to
 Dr Joana Carmo,
 joanavcarmo@gmail.com

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DESCRIPTION

A previously healthy man, aged 32 years, was admitted with severe epigastric pain, vomiting and low-grade fever since the previous week. On physical examination, he had moderate abdominal tenderness. Laboratory results showed mild leucocytosis. After a careful interview, he revealed that he recently ate sushi. An upper gastrointestinal endoscopy was performed and showed on the gastric body, a filiform parasite firmly attached to an area of swollen and hyperaemic mucosa, with its end penetrating the gastric mucosa (figure 1). The larva was removed with a Roth net and the patient's symptoms resolved immediately (figure 2). Microbiological analysis showed the larva belonged to *Anisakis* spp.

Anisakiasis is a zoonosis caused by nematode parasites of the genus *Anisakis*.¹ It is caused by the consumption of contaminated raw or undercooked fish or seafood.² Most of the cases were described in Japan due to food habits; however, it has been increasingly recognised in Western countries.²⁻³ Patients can have allergic symptoms like angioedema, urticarial and anaphylaxis.¹ Gastrointestinal symptoms include abdominal pain, nausea and vomiting and complications like digestive bleeding, bowel obstruction, perforation and peritonitis can also arise.¹ Patients can have a low-grade fever.¹ A severe leucocytosis can be present, but peripheral eosinophilia is rare.³ Three clinical patterns of the gastrointestinal tract involvement were described and all of them can mimic an acute surgical abdomen: (1) gastric acute form in which endoscopic removal of the larva is a curative treatment;¹⁻² (2) intestinal form with an acute or chronic presentation, a more challenging diagnosis

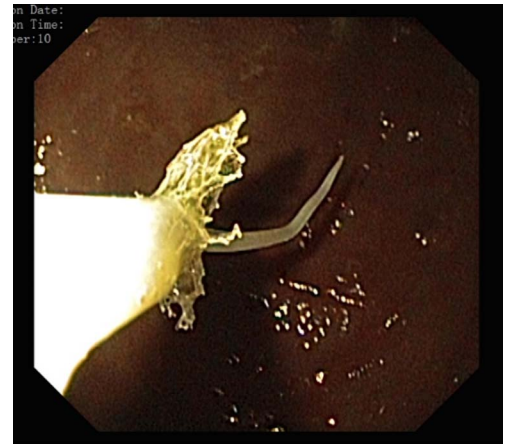


Figure 2 The larva was removed with a Roth net.

and classically surgically treated;¹⁻³ (3) ectopic subtype with peritoneal cavity involvement.²⁻³

Learning points

- ▶ Owing to changes in food habits, anisakiasis is a growing disease in Western countries, which should be suspected in patients with a history of ingestion of raw or uncooked fish.
- ▶ Anisakiasis can mimic an acute surgical abdomen.
- ▶ Endoscopy plays an important role in the diagnosis and treatment of gastric anisakiasis.

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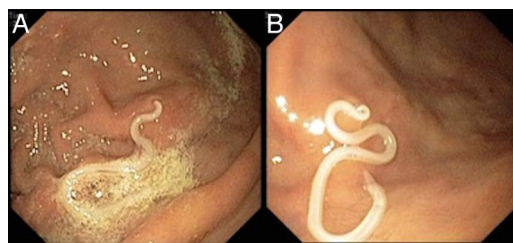


Figure 1 A parasite firmly attached to an area of swollen and hyperaemic mucosa, with its end penetrating gastric mucosa, was seen on the gastric body in an upper gastrointestinal endoscopy.



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