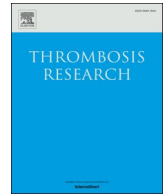




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Letter to the Editors-in-Chief

Pulmonary embolism in a young pregnant woman with COVID-19



On March 29, 2020, a 17-year-old obese woman (BMI 32 Kg/m²) was admitted at 29 weeks of gestation to our COVID-19 Maternity Hub in Milan for fever, mild dyspnea and rhinitis in the last three days. Her past medical history was unremarkable and she had a negative family history of venous thromboembolism. Her body temperature was 37.3 °C, heart and respiratory rates, and oxygen saturation were normal. A nasopharyngeal swab revealed a SARS-CoV-2 infection. On March 30, her respiratory function suddenly worsened and she started oxygen supplementation with 2 l per minute via nasal cannula. On April 1, she developed tachypnea (30 breaths per minute) and oxygen flow was increased to 6 l per minute via Venturi mask. Blood culture demonstrated a *Staphylococcus aureus* bacteremia. The same day antithrombotic prophylaxis with enoxaparin 4000 IU once daily was started. On Apr 4, the patient developed an acute respiratory failure and underwent a chest CT-scan that showed a segmental pulmonary embolus in the right superior lobe, other than a ground-glass opacification and early parenchymal consolidation at lower lobes of the lungs. Laboratory tests did not vary compared to those at admission, except for the neutrophil/lymphocyte ratio and an increase of ferritin concentration (Table 1). At 29 weeks and 6 days, the patient delivered by urgent cesarean section for worsening dyspnea. A female new-born of 1490 g (appropriate for gestational age) was admitted to Neonatal Intensive Care Unit and did well. In the postpartum, enoxaparin was increased to therapeutic doses of 8000 IU twice daily. The patient required a non-invasive ventilation with CPAP, and a gradual improvement of her respiratory function occurred in the following days. On April 9, CPAP ventilation was discontinued and oxygen supplementation with 3 l per minute via nasal cannula was sufficient to reach a SpO₂ of 99%. On April 14 the patient was discharged.

Despite the young age and a personal and family history negative for thrombosis, this young obese woman with COVID-19 and *Staphylococcus aureus* infection developed pulmonary embolism. Although the embolus was small and did not worsen coagulation laboratory parameters, it caused a severe impairment of patient's clinical conditions and prompted an urgent timing of delivery. There is stemming evidence that pulmonary embolism is a complication of COVID-19 [1]. Obese pregnant women with COVID-19 may have a particularly

high risk of pulmonary embolism because of coexisting prothrombotic conditions. This should be considered for tailoring antithrombotic prophylaxis.

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Declaration of competing interest

The authors do not declare any conflict of interest.

Table 1

Laboratory findings at admission and at worsening of respiratory function.

| | Mar 29, 2020 - admission | Apr 4, 2020 - diagnosis of pulmonary embolism |
|---|--------------------------|---|
| White-cell count (per mm ³) | 6910 | 6022 |
| Differential count (per mm ³) | | |
| Total neutrophils | 5660 | 3910 |
| Total lymphocytes | 770 | 1830 |
| Total monocytes | 470 | 430 |
| Platelet count (per mm ³) | 300,000 | 335,000 |
| Hemoglobin (g/l) | 85 | 91 |
| Albumin (g/l) | 34 | 24 |
| Alanine aminotransferase (U/l) | 18 | 12 |
| Aspartate aminotransferase (U/l) | 29 | ND |
| Lactate dehydrogenase (U/l) | 168 | 223 |
| Creatinine (μmol/l) | 48 | 47 |
| EGFR (ml/min/1.73 m ²) | 144 | 145 |
| Prothrombin time (sec) | 10.9 | 9.8 |
| Activated partial-thromboplastin time (sec) | 31.8 | 27.2 |
| Fibrinogen (g/l) | 6.02 | 5.43 |
| D-dimer (mg/l) | 16.4 | 15.8 |
| Serum ferritin (μg/l) | 117 | 418 |
| Procalcitonin (ng/ml) | ND | 0.10 |
| C-reactive protein (mg/l) | 28.5 | 28.1 |

References

- [1] F.A. Klok, Kruip MJHA, N.J.M. van der Meer, et al., Incidence of thrombotic complications in critically ill ICU patients with COVID-19, *Thromb Res* (2020), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.thromres.2020.04.013>.
- Ida Martinelli^{a,*}, Enrico Ferrazzi^b, Alessandro Ciavarella^a,
Roberta Erra^b, Enrico Iurlaro^b, Manuela Ossola^b, Andrea Lombardi^c,
Francesco Blasi^d, Fabio Mosca^e, Flora Peyvandi^{a,f}
- ^a *Fondazione IRCCS Ca' Granda - Ospedale Maggiore Policlinico, A. Bianchi Bonomi Hemophilia and Thrombosis Center, Milan, Italy*
- ^b *Fondazione IRCCS Ca' Granda Ospedale Maggiore Policlinico, Unit of Obstetrics, Department of Mother Neonate and Child, Mangiagalli Centre, Milan, Italy*
- ^c *Fondazione IRCCS Ca' Granda - Ospedale Maggiore Policlinico, Infectious Diseases Unit, Milan, Italy*
- ^d *Fondazione IRCCS Ca' Granda - Ospedale Maggiore Policlinico, Internal Medicine Department, Respiratory Unit and Cystic Fibrosis Adult Center, Department of Pathophysiology and Transplantation, University of Milan, Milan, Italy*
- ^e *Fondazione IRCCS Ca' Granda - Ospedale Maggiore Policlinico, Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, Department of Clinical Sciences and Community Health, Milan, Italy*
- ^f *Department of Pathophysiology and Transplantation for Health, University of Milan, Milan, Italy*
- E-mail address: ida.martinelli@policlinico.mi.it (I. Martinelli).

* Corresponding author at: Fondazione IRCCS Ca' Granda - Ospedale Maggiore Policlinico, via Pace 9, Milan 20122, Italy.