What you would not expect after a difficult intra-aortic balloon pump removal

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We report a case of malfunction of a sheetless intra-aortic balloon pump due to rupture of the internal metal wire rather than the plastic balloon itself. In fact, the balloon envelope remained intact up to the extraction, keeping the two parts of the broken catheter together, avoiding more serious complications (Fig. 1).

Figure 1: Intra-aortic balloon pump catheter after removal, showing an intact balloon envelope but a broken internal wire (arrow). The balloon was inserted prophylactically with an uncomplicated sheetless technique at the time of operation in the anaesthetic room. The patient was extubated on postoperative day 1 and the balloon had to be removed the following morning (i.e. 48 h after its insertion).