Three cases of elevations in serum creatinine secondary to a monoclonal IgM have been previously described in patients known to have Waldenstrom’s macroglobulinaemia. These falsely elevated results occurred with an enzymatic assay (Roche Diagnostics) and were confirmed to be normal using high performance liquid chromatography (HPLC) [1]. Fortunately, this appears to be an uncommon problem, although possibly under-recognized. The mechanism remains unknown, although its occurrence with a number of different assays implies that there may be more than one. The previous report in the literature referred to an aqueous test method [1].

Our patients’ serum was tested with similar methods without any resulting interference.

As clinicians who see patients frequently for elevated serum creatinine values, nephrologists must be aware of the limitations of this test. Pseudohypercreatininaemia secondary to a monoclonal protein should be considered in patients with an isolated creatinine elevation, particularly when associated with a normal urea, or an elevated total protein. Measuring the serum creatinine using a completely different method may prevent other unnecessary tests or procedures.

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1Division of Nephrology
Dalhousie University, Halifax
Nova Scotia, Canada
2Section of Nephrology
University of Manitoba
Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada
3Department of Clinical Biochemistry
St Boniface General Hospital
Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada

Email: Leroy.Storsley@cdha.nshealth.ca


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Creatinine and GFR: an imperfect marriage of convenience

Sir,

While I would like to congratulate Fontsere [1] for his recent work that further elucidates the relationship between glomerular filtration rate (GFR) and serum creatinine, [1] it is not without some consternation that I watch the evolution of the use of creatinine as a marker for GFR. Since it has always been a marriage of convenience at the expense of accuracy, I think that no one should be shocked that Fontsere correctly notes, anything that upsets that tenuous balance and interferes with the production, (including diurnal variations) [7–9] measurement [10–13] or secretion [14–16] of endogenous creatinine will further alter those estimations of GFR from equations using a solitary serum creatinine.

Therefore, the problem is not limited to one particular equation. The problem is and has always been with creatinine itself and our own search for convenience. Creatinine clearance is not and has never been synonymous with GFR, and all of the regression analysis will not make it so because the serum creatinine depends upon many factors other than filtration. We should not be surprised that the more approximations that we make, the less accurate our data becomes. The problems come when we actually delude ourselves (and others) into thinking that these equations actually represent an actual GFR.

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HNDT, Auburn University
Opelika, AL 36801, USA

Email: hndt512@bellsouth.net

Ethanol lock solution as an adjunct treatment for preventing recurrent catheter-related sepsis—first case report in dialysis setting

Sir,

Preliminary studies have reported the successful use of ethanol lock or flush techniques in preventing or controlling catheter-related infections in oncology patients [1] and in those on total parenteral nutrition [2–4]. Ethanol irrigation has also been used for valve disinfection of the Lifesite® haemodialysis access system [5]. We describe here the first documented case of use of an ethanol lock technique as adjunctive treatment for preventing dialysis catheter infection in a patient with recurrent bacteraemia.

A 70-year-old woman with a central venous catheter (CVC) at the right internal jugular site developed sepsis. The CVC was removed and replaced by another inserted at the left internal jugular site, and treatment with vancomycin plus gentamycin was initiated (day 1). Both peripheral blood culture and CVC tip quantitative culture (TQC) yielded methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA). On day 18, persistent MRSA bacteremia prompted removal of the CVC, which, when cultured, also grew MRSA. Another CVC was placed at the left subclavian site. On day 22, because of severe sepsis and CVC dysfunction, the CVC was changed, with a new CVC being placed at the left internal jugular site. Cultures from the blood and CVC tip were sterile. Venous thrombosis was excluded by ultrasound examination and endocarditis by transthoracic echocardiography. On day 24, intermittent haemodialysis was initiated with two silicone uncuffed tunnelled dialysis catheters replacing the last CVC over guidewire exchange. No further CVC was inserted. Ethanol lock technique (each catheter was filled with 3 ml of a 60% ethanol solution containing 500 IU of unfractionated heparin per ml) was started on day 24 and repeated after each dialysis session. The locks were removed at the beginning of each dialysis session. On day 26, the patient’s fever disappeared. Repeated dialysis catheter-drawn and peripheral blood cultures were sterile. On day 32, because of adverse cutaneous reactions, vancomycin and gentamycin were replaced by rifampin and trimethoprim-sulfamethoxazole. Both antibiotics and lock technique were stopped on day 53. No catheter malfunction was observed during dialysis sessions. On day 60, the dialysis catheters were systematically removed and replaced over guidewire. Contrast phase inverted microscope (DMIL, Leica) examination of transparent biofilms showed no microcracking of the distal tip of the removed catheters. Six months later, the patient was persistently dialysed using the catheters inserted on day 60, without relapse of catheter infection.

Locking ethanol to the catheter lumen may induce systemic spill-out of the ethanol. We did not measure blood ethanol concentration after ethanol lock, but our patient experienced no adverse events. In a study performed in children, flushing a 74% ethanol solution through catheters into children with catheter-associated bacteraemia induced only mild adverse effects [1].

Ethanol is an effective disinfectant with a broad range of antimicrobial activity; it is safe, easy to use, inexpensive and has never been implicated in acquired resistance. However, an ethanol concentration above 40% is required to inhibit bacterial growth in established biofilms [6]. For our patient, we used a 60% ethanol solution. Catheter occlusion was observed after 100% ethanol lock in a recent report, which, however, did not specify the type of catheter used [7]. In our case we used silicone catheters, whose mechanical properties are not altered even after prolonged ethanol exposure [8].

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