A healthy 47-year-old man presented with acute pain and swelling of the submandibular region, followed by fever. He had been treated for caries 3 days earlier. On examination, left gingival swelling and tender erythema on the neck were noted. Laryngoscopy revealed a swollen epiglottis, and contrast-enhanced computed tomography revealed mandibular swelling and emphysema extending to the neck (Figure 1A and B). A diagnosis of gas gangrene in the sublingual space was established.

Although only a few cases have been reported, gas gangrene around the neck is a potentially life-threatening complication caused by odontogenic infections. Its presentation includes fever, swallowing difficulty, or trismus. Management includes therapy with broad-spectrum antibiotics and early aggressive surgical intervention, but the prognosis is reportedly poor.

For this patient, fenestration surgery and drainage were immediately conducted. The culture from the wound was polymicrobial, therapy with a broad-spectrum antibiotic was continued for 21 days, and he was discharged without complications.

References