WANDERING SPLEEN WITH TORSION OF THE PEDICLE

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UNDER certain conditions which permit loosening of its attachments the spleen descends from its normal position in the left hypochondrium into the abdomen. When the elongation of its pedicle is such as to allow its appearance in other than the left upper abdominal quadrant it is designated as a wandering or floating spleen. The factors concerned in its abnormal mobility are both congenital and acquired. The former are chiefly two, the length of the splenic pedicle and the conformation of the abdominal cavity. latter the area between the intercostochondral arches is materially diminished while the paravertebral niches are definitely shallower, as a result of which intra-abdominal pressure is diverted from its normal direction and prolapse occurs. The acquired factors may be grouped under two headings, increased weight of the spleen and the conditions which bring about relaxation of the abdominal wall and of the ligaments which support the abdominal viscera. While either of these factors may be the determining one in a given case, in a majority of instances two or more will be found to have contributed to the splenoptosis. When the mobility of the spleen attains an extent that will allow axial rotation on its pedicle, torsion of varying degree may result with more or less disastrous consequences. Two such instances have come under my observation.

CASE I.—A white woman, aged thirty-four, robust and well developed, came under my care in 1912. She gave no history of previous illness or of symptoms related to the spleen. She had borne one child and at the time of the then present illness was three and one-half months pregnant. While engaged in household duties she was seized with sudden, abdominal colic attended with nausea and vomiting. She was admitted to the hospital forty-eight hours after the onset of the attack, at which time she had a temperature of 1011/2° and pulse of 110. The right half of the abdomen was rigid and tender and presented a tumor which extended from the pelvic brim to a point above and to the right of the umbilicus. Pelvic examination revealed a pregnant uterus with the tumor lying in contact with its right upper surface. The urine was negative. The blood count showed a leucocytosis of 12,000 with an increase in the polymorphonuclear cells. Operation revealed the tumor to be the spleen, approximately two and one-half times the normal size. It was not adherent and was easily delivered through the incision. The pedicle showed two complete turns, the tail of the pancreas being incorporated in its proximal end. This was disengaged by detorsion, the pedicle ligated and the spleen removed. The latter showed intense congestion but no thrombosis of the vessels. The patient made a good recovery and underwent normal delivery five and one-half months later.

Case II.—White woman, aged forty-six, thin and ptotic in physique, came under observation in 1919. She had borne four children and had passed the menopause seven years before. She gave a history of digestive disturbance extending over a period of years but had had no colic until the onset of her present illness. The latter was charac-

terized by severe cramps in the abdomen lasting three days, accompanied by nausea, vomiting and fever. Following the subsidence of the cramps the right lower quadrant became exquisitely sensitive and a mass became apparent. At the time of her admission to the hospital, two weeks after the onset of her illness, she presented a fixed mass in the right lower quadrant which was extremely sensitive. Pelvic examination showed an atrophic uterus; tubes and ovaries not palpable. Urine showed a trace of albumin, some granular casts, otherwise negative. Blood showed hæmoglobin of 80; red cells, 4,000,000; white cells, 10,000. Operation revealed a tumor completely covered by omental and intestinal adhesions except at its upper pole. Upon separation of adherent omentum and intestine the tumor proved to be the spleen. The pedicle showed two complete turns and presented thrombosis of both artery and vein. The surface of the spleen showed a number of spontaneous ruptures from which no bleeding had taken place, indicating that they had occurred subsequent to the occlusion of the arterial blood supply by torsion. Capillary oozing from raw surface on adhered organs controlled by ligatures and hot packs, pedicle ligated and spleen removed. Recovery was delayed by a right femoral thrombophlebitis, the patient being discharged from hospital four weeks after operation. This spleen weighed 370 grams; was of dark, reddish-gray color, smooth, with a few fine, fibrous tags attached over its diaphragmatic surface. The organ consisted of two almost completely separated lobes with a fissure between, extending from the hilus over the anterosuperior surface down to the inferior margin. On the diaphragmatic surface there was a transverse fracture near the lower pole, forty-seven centimetres long, two to three millimetres wide and about 5 millimetres deep. A crescentic fracture was found near the upper pole posteriorly, thirty millimetres long, six millimetres wide and seven millimetres deep. In the parietal surface was an L-shaped longitudinal fracture near the hilus, sixty-three millimetres long with an arm twelve millimetres long, four millimetres wide and six millimetres deep. In the diaphragmatic surface near the anterior border was a fracture thirty-three millimetres long, three millimetres wide and eight millimetres deep extending longitudinally from the end of a cleft. On section the pulp was very dark reddish-brown, almost black, except near the capsule, where it was reddish-gray. No Malpighian corpuscles were apparent. The vessels were thrombosed.

In a review of the literature we have been able to find ninety-five reports of wandering spleen with torsion of the pedicle, in addition to the two cases herewith recorded. No case has been included in which torsion of the pedicle is not specifically mentioned as a causative factor in the production of symptoms and pathology. The pertinent facts, as revealed by an analysis of these reports, are shown in the following tables:

Age	Female	Male	Total
I-IO	. 0	1 (age 6)	1
I I-20	9	2	11
21-30	28	I	29
31-40	26	I	27
41-50	II		11
51-60	3		3
61-70	I		I
71-80	I		I
Not stated	9		9
Age and sex not stated			2
	_	-	
Totals	88	5	95

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It is interesting to note that twelve, or 14.3 per cent., were observed before the age of twenty, while fifty-six, or 66.7 per cent., occurred between the ages of twenty and forty, leaving but 16, or 19 per cent. for the years of normal physical decline. Of the ninety-three cases in which the sex was stated but five were noted in males. In the group occurring before the age of twenty it would seem that congenital factors played the predominant etiological part since the conditions which give rise to abdominal distension and atony were absent. In the group of twenty-nine occurring between the

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Normal	ΙI
Obese, robust or muscular	9
Spare, thin or delicate	
Asthenic or ptotic	13
Not stated	50
-	—
Total	95

Malaria

History of		Enlargement e Torsion	Size of Spleen When Removed
I	. I		2190 gms.
I I, no history, prasites found. I			1350 gms.
· I	. 13	years	4200 gms.
1	•	₂ years	1200 gms.
I		- •	1520 gms.
ī			ů č
I	. 3	years	37x22x12 cm.
I			1750 gms.
I	. І		400 gms.
I	. І		5 to 6 times normal
I	. І		2100 gms.
I	. І		3500 gms.
I	. І		800 gms.
I	. І		3000 gms.
I	. 2	years	1000 gms.
I	. 3	years	1600 gms.
I	. 2	years	2125 gms.
I	. 7	years	750 gms.
I	. І		1635 gms.
I			25x18 cm.
I			
I	. 3	years	1870 gms.
I			
I	. І		710 gms.
I			1520 gms.
I	•		1540 gms.
I	. 17	years	840 gms.
Total, 29	. 18		

ages of twenty-one and thirty, constituting 34.5 per cent., at a time of life when physical development is presumably at its highest, it is reasonable to presume that congenital causes could not be entirely excluded in the determination of etiology.

Of the forty-five cases in which physical development was registered but twenty-five were recorded as belonging to the types in which ectopia is commonly found, the remaining showing normal or robust physique. While the spleen may participate in a general visceroptosis it is frequently the one organ which remains in its normal position and again it is often the one organ showing ptosis when the remainder evince no such tendency.

A history of malaria was given by twenty-eight patients and the parasites found in a twenty-ninth who gave no such history. In eighteen there was a known presence of splenic enlargement or "ague cake" before the advent of torsion. Even in the presence of such an incidence it is evident that the weight of the spleen is not the prime factor in its displacement and torsion since in no history is there mention made of tumor or splenomegaly of other origin in which prolapse and torsion were complicating features. The splenic enlargement common to Banti's and Gaucher's disease, leukæmia and hemolytic jaundice is usually unassociated with prolapse even in the absence of anchoring adhesions. Of the twenty-one cases in which the weight of the

PREGNANCY AND THE PUERPERIUM

88 Females

		•	
Parous	Cases	Torsion During Pregnancy or the Puerperium	
P	3	I Pregnant 4 mos. Splenectomy.	Recovery
P	7	I Pregnant 5 mos. Splenectomy.	Died
ιР	8	I Pregnant 2 mos. Splenectomy.	Recovery
2 P	6	I Pregnant 4 mos. Splenectomy.	Recovery
3 P	5	I Pregnant 5 mos. Splenectomy.	Died
4 P	4	I Pregnant 3 mos. Abortion during attack. Splenectomy.	Recovery
5 P	6	1 Pregnant 5 mos. Abortion 24 hrs. after op. Splenectomy.	Died
6 P	4	I Pregnant 4 mos. Splenectomy.	Recovery
7 P	3	I Pregnant 2 mos. Exploration and drainage.	Died
8 P	I	I Torsion several days after delivery. Splenectomy.	Recovery
9 P	2	I Pregnant 3 days after delivery. Splenectomy.	Died
10 P	I	I Pregnant 2 weeks after delivery. Splenectomy.	Recovery
14 P	I	Total—12 Deaths—5 Recoveries—7	
	_		
Total	51		
Non-P.	2 I		
Not			
stated	. 16		
		•	
Total	88		

The autopsy records of two, both in the fifth month of pregnancy are given.

- (1) Operative diagnosis, Torsion of pedicle with intestinal obstruction: death sixth day: autopsy: purulent decidual endometritis due to strangulation of intestine.
- (2) Operative diagnosis, Torsion of pedicle. Death fifth day. Autopsy: purulent decidual endometritis, endocarditis, hypostatic pneumonia, pulmonary cedema.

spleen was recorded at the time of removal, sixteen had noted splenic enlargement for periods varying from one to seventeen years, the weight of the organ in the twenty-one cases ranging from 400 to 4,200 grams, the average being 1,695 grams. Uncomplicated malarial splenomegaly does not as a rule attain such size, the enlargement in these instances being augmented by the changes incidental to the altered circulation.

Of seventy-two females in whose record the obstetrical history is given, twenty-one are classified as non-parous and fifty-one as parous; of the latter eight were uni-parous, three parous, seven multiparous, while thirty-three had borne from two to fourteen children each. The latter group doubtless forms the basis for the statement that prolapse of the spleen occurs most frequently in women whose abdomens have become inelastic from numerous pregnancies. It is readily granted that flaccidity and relaxation of the abdomen resulting from repeated pregnancies furnish the ideal conditions for such prolapse but a further explanation must be sought in the twenty-one non-parous women and in the five males forming 26.4 per cent of the total number under discussion. The gravity of splenic torsion in the course of pregnancy and the puerperium is graphically shown by the mortality rate of 41.7 per cent. in the twelve cases reported. In two abortions occurred during the acute attack, one before and one after splenectomy, one dying and one recovering. In three torsions occurred after delivery, one dying and two recovering following splenectomy. Of the remaining seven operated on during pregnancy, six by splenectomy and one by exploration and drainage, three died and four recovered.

Abdominal discomfort, digestive distr	urbance, on	e with malena	10
Tumor known to be present, no other symptom mentioned			25
Tumor known to be present, with col	ics or disco	mfort	3
Pelvic pain and discomfort, I with m	alena, 1 wi	th uterine hæmorrhage	4
Previous history not stated			34
			95
Duration of A	TTACK AT	TIME OF OPERATION	
Acute, Under 2 Weeks, 58		Chronic, Over 2 Weeks, 37	
Acute	58	2 mos	3
Time stated	13	5 weeks	I
Chronic—Time not stated	24	4 mos	2
		4 weeks	I
	95	Several days	I
		8 weeks	I
		2 weeks	3
		I mo	I
		Time not stated	24
			37

History of acute onset following lifting heavy weight given in seven.

In sixty-one cases there is a history of symptoms antedating the torsion which may be justly ascribed to the splenic displacement, in twenty-eight of which a tumor was known to be present. Colics of mild type, presumably due to partial twists of the pedicle, were noted in nineteen. Digestive disturbances due to pressure and to traction on the stomach, intestine and pancreas were commonly noted in these and were the only symptoms observed in ten. Pelvic discomfort, disturbance of menstruation, vesical and rectal tenesmus have been noted when the spleen occupied a pelvic location. Both metrorrhagia and malena have resulted from pressure and secondary circulatory change.

In thirty-four no symptoms are mentioned other than those noted with the initial attack. The attacks may be classified as acute, subacute and chronic. The symptoms of the acute attacks, barring the known presence of a wandering spleen, offer nothing conclusive other than the presence of a major abdominal disaster. Pain, nausea and vomiting with elevation of pulse, temperature and leucocyte count are usually present. Such an onset with variation in intensity of symptoms is described in fifty-eight cases. In the subacute and chronic varieties the torsion of the pedicle has stopped short of strangulation or the patients have survived the acute onset with the spleen more or less isolated by adherence of omentum and intestine with symptoms directed to the site of the misplaced organ. In instances in which the spleen was known to have been mobile and in others in which a movable tumor had been noted, comment is made upon the rapid enlargement of the tumor following torsion. In thirteen instances the duration of the attack as stated varied from several days to four months while in twenty-four the time is not stated. The description of the findings in the latter group indicates them to be of the chronic type.

LOCATION OF TUMOR

Location given	5
Right upper quadrant 2	
Left upper quadrant 7	
Epigastrium 2	
Mid-abdomen4	
Right half abdomen	
Pelvis and abdomen13	
Abdomen 6	
Right lower quadrant9	
Left lower quadrant 8	
Hypogastrium 4	
In all four quadrants 2	
Left half abdomen	
Pelvis 10	
Location not mentioned	7
Tumor not detected, distension and rigidity	3
	-
Total95	5

Number palpable through vagina and rectrum, 34

The displaced spleen escaped detection in but three instances, the distension and rigidity effectually hiding it. In seven no mention is made of loca-

tion and in six the tumor is merely described as being in the abdomen. In seventy-nine the tumor is accurately located and it interesting to note that in but seven was it found in the left upper quadrant. The length of the pedicle offers the only limitation to its wandering proclivities, it being found in all parts of the abdomen and pelvis. In the latter it may rest on the uterus forcing the latter into a retroverted position or it may lie in the cul de sac behind the uterus. Mention is made in thirty-four of the histories of the tumor being palpable through the vagina or rectum.

PRE-OPERATIVE DIAGNOSIS

Declared enlare or hidrory
Prolapsed spleen or kidney
Kidney
Hydronephrosis right kidney with twisted pedicle
Appendiceal abscess
A A
Ovarian tumor with twisted pedicle
Ovarian cyst, twisted pedicle with intestinal obstruction
Hydrosalpinx or tubo-ovarian cyst
Uterine or ovatian tumor
Uterine fibroid
Cyst
Hæmatocele
Tumor omentum or mesentery
Sacrococcygeal tumor
Intestinal obstruction
Peritonitis or obstruction
Peritonitis, indeterminate
Tumor
Spleen
Enlarged spleen
Inflamed spleen
Floating spleen
Floating spleen with twisted pedicle
Wandering spleen
Wandering spleen or hydrated cyst
Wandering spleen, fixed
Movable spleen or peritonitis
Dislocated spleen
Dislocated spleen with twisted pedicle 4
Diagnosis not stated

When one notes the varying locations in which the spleen has been found, in all but seven of which it was widely distant from its normal position, one is prepared for the failures in diagnosis. In thirty-three the condition was recognized as an acute abdominal catastrophe but no pre-operative diagnosis charted. In nine it was tumor of unknown origin. In twenty-three the tumor was thought to have originated in the ovary or uterus. In but nineteen

was the spleen recognized as the organ at fault while in the remainder obstruction, peritonitis, the omentum, appendix and kidney, hæmatocele and sacrococcygeal tumor were suspected. When a history of splenic enlargement or mobility was lacking and the tumor was located other than in the left upper quadrant, its origin was obviously thought to be connected with the organs normally situated at its point of lodgement.

BLOOD COUNT		
Made		
Not made		
	_	
Total 95		
Before and After Operation, 11	After Operation, 13	
15500 Normal in 1 mo.	17000 - 15000 - 14000	
28000 Normal in 4 mos.	7000 With decreased lymphocytes	
28700 10000	2 Increased blood-platelets	
13500 10650	10000 4 months later 50000	
7000 Normal	14000 - 7000	
10000 Increased lymphocytes	30000	
Normal Increased white cells	14400	
Increased whites Normal	13760 - 12500	
12200 43000	Normal	
17800 14800	14000	
11300 27000 - 10000	5600	
	30000 - 10000	
Low Hem. & R. C. Normal W. C.	Increased W. C 2	
Inc., B. P 1	Increased W. C. with parasites I	
Malarial parasites I	Anæmia of pernicious type with	
Anæmia. Normal W. C. 3 yrs. later	megalo- and normoblasts, poikilo-	
16000 I	cytosis I	
Low R. C. Normal W. C 2	Normal blood counts 12	
Normal white count I	8400 before operation, none after I	
Low R. C. Increased W. C		

Blood counts at some time in the course of the calamity were made in forty-eight of the ninety-five cases. With but few exceptions the blood study has not been carried out through complete convalescence. Normal counts are reported in a rather surprisingly large number of cases, the inference being that the degree of torsion was not sufficient to produce marked circulatory changes in the splenic tissue. With the acute torsions the number of leucocytes has uniformly been increased, the differential count showing nothing distinctive. Following splenectomy the red cells showed a temporary decrease with rather rapid replacement: the white cells, a gradual decrease with a temporary preponderance of lymphocytes. Increased blood-platelets were recorded in but two. The blood count, as a rule, has regained its normal proportions in from one to four months. In two cases an increased white-cell count was noted long after splenectomy, one of 50,000 at the end of four months, and one of 16,000 at the end of three years: no explanation is offered in either instance.

OPERATIONS

Primary splenectomy	83
Recovered	
Died15	
Result not given	
Detorsion and replacement followed later by splenectomy	2
Total splenectomies (deaths 15, mortality 17.6 per cent.)	85
Detorsion and replacement (died, I—mesenteric thrombosis)	5
Splenoplexy alone (no deaths)	3
Exploration (closure I, drainage I—died)	2
Total	95

Primary splenectomies were done in eighty-three. Detorsion and replacement were carried out in two cases, both of which later showed acute torsion and were then treated by splenectomy, making a total of eighty-five splenectomies, of which sixty-eight recovered and fifteen died with the result not stated in two, a mortality of 17.6 per cent. Detorsion and replacement constituted the only operation in five with four recoveries and one death, the latter due to mesenteric thrombosis. Splenopexy alone was done in three with no deaths and exploration alone in two, one with drainage and one without drainage, with one death. In the patients treated by splenopexy and detorsion with replacement classed as recovered, no follow-up as to the ultimate fate of the replaced organ is given. The operations which attempt to conserve the spleen when the organ has acquired a wanderlust and become the victim of a torsion must have a very limited scope. The circulatory damage sustained as a result of the twisting of the pedicle, the greatly increased size commonly noted in such organs and the insecurity of any known

Size		
By weight		53
By measurement		10
Not enlarged		I
Enlarged		ΙI
Not stated		
Total		05

Size by Weight in Grams	Size by Measurement
200-500 8	12x5x9 cm 1
500-1000	19x9 cm 1
1000-150010	18x11x7 cm 1
1500-20008	21x15 cm 1
2000-25007	37x22x12 cm I
2500-3000	16x11 cm 1
3000-3500	30x15 cm
3500-4000 I	25x18 cm 1
4000-4500 I	177x101x114 mm
	5½x5 inches 1
Total 53	_
	Total

method of replacement all argue against conservative procedures. The ease with which other tissues rich in reticulo-endothelial cells compensate for its loss invalidates any objection as to a loss of its function. In the light of these considerations splenectomy is to be considered the operation of choice.

The normal spleen varies greatly in size in different individuals and in the same individual under varying conditions. Its average weight is given as 225 grams and its average dimensions at ten centimetres in length, six centimetres in width and three centimetres in thickness. Of fifty-three of the present series whose weight was stated, but eight were under 500 grams, the remaining forty-five varying from 500 to 4,500. In ten in which the size was determined by measurement only, a corresponding increase in size over the normal is indicated. It is evident that circulatory change dependent upon the elongation of the pedicle with malposition induces in the wandering spleen a gradual enlargement aside from that resulting from malarial infection and acute torsion, while, as noted above, the latter accident causes an immediate enlargement due to the intense congestion.

PATHOLOGICAL FEATURES

Infarction	2
Thrombosis of splenic vein with infarction	2
Old diffuse infarcts	1
Hæmorrhagic infiltration, with and without necrosis, rents and ruptures	17
Fibrosis	4
Enlargement, congestion, hepatization, no gross microscopical change	17
Chronic congestion with hyperplasia	4
Malarial splenomegaly	8
Necrosis with hæmorrhage—no stain	5
Chronic passive congestion	11
Pathology not mentioned	24
	_
Total	o

The pathology reported by the various observers, as far as it relates to the spleen alone, comprises nutritional changes varying from congestion to necrosis superinduced by mechanical interference with the splenic artery and vein.

Four specimens are mentioned as containing blood cysts of appreciable size: eighteen as showing thrombosis of the splenic artery or vein, or of both. One refers to a woman, with recognizable splenic tumor during pregnancy, who two weeks after normal delivery was seized with acute pain and brought to the hospital at the end of the seventh week following labor. Incision showed a cystic tumor from which fourteen litres of thick, brownish pus, sterile on culture, were removed. This was due to a necrotic spleen resulting from dislocation and twisting of pedicle. Recovery followed splenectomy.

In fifteen cases the presence of free fluid was noted in the peritoneal cavity, varying in amount from several ounces to six litres: it was described as colorless and yellow fluid, serum, hæmorrhagic serum, blood and blood-clots. Three of the fifteen showed fatal termination.

The pedicle has been described as of various lengths, the longest being ten inches, the largest compared in size to that of the fetal arm. In all the cases it has been noted as twisted and in sixty an estimate of the torsion given, ranging from one-half to six complete turns. The vessels have been described as thrombotic and as dilated, both artery and vein in some, the vein alone in others. In two the size of the vein was compared to that of the small intestine. In eight the tail of the pancreas is noted as being involved in the torsion, in all but one it being disengaged by detorsion and escape injury; in one it was resected with the pedicle without untoward result.

Seven cases are recorded as showing intestinal obstruction, three involving the small intestine, one the transverse colon and three the sigmoid: two recovered, four died and in one the result was not stated. In the small intestine obstructions, the bowel was adhered to and caught in the twists of the pedicle: the transverse colon was adhered, kinked and compressed: the sigmoid showed volvulus from traction in one, adherence and kinking in one and adherence and compression occlusion in one.

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