Letters to the Editor

The results accord with the suggestion that C pylori is able to neutralise bactericidal gastric acid very rapidly by buffering H ions. The rapid alkalisation of the microenvironment around C pylori seems likely to be mediated by the great amount of active urease available in the outer membrane of the bacterium. Thus urease of C pylori is a highly active enzyme that may be associated with virulence by different means: first, the urease activity protects the bacterium from the gastric acid; and secondly, the generated ammonia may then cause cytopathic effects like cell damage and possibly inflammation.3

G BODE
P MALFERTHEINER
M NILIUS
G LEHNHARDT
H DITSCHUNEIT
Department of Internal Medicine II, University Clinic Ulm, Steinhövelstr. 9, D-7900 Ulm, West Germany

References

Campylobacter pyloridis associated acute gastritis in a child

The frequent association between Campylobacter pyloridis and chronic gastritis is well documented.1 Marshall et al showed that this organism can cause acute gastritis in volunteers.2 Marshal et al suggested that chronic gastritis associated with C pylori is preceded by an acute phase which is usually undiagnosed.2 We could find only one such case.3 In this case the micro-organism was not cultured and it was only shown by histological techniques. We report a case of C pylori-associated acute gastritis occurring in a child, in whom the diagnosis was confirmed by histological and microbiological methods.

An 8 year old boy was admitted to hospital with a three week history of epigastric pain and vomiting. The child was malnourished and there was no history of drug intake. A gastroduodenoscopy showed multiple erosions surrounded by red and friable mucosa in the antrum and body of the stomach. Biopsy specimens were taken from duodenum, stomach (fundus, body, and antrum), and oesophagus for histological assessment, immunoperoxidase staining, and bacteriology.3

Histologically, the antral mucosa showed oedema, hyperaemia, and an intense polymorphonuclear neutrophil leucocyte infiltration in the lamina propria, mucus layer, and inside the glands (fig 1a). The oxyntic mucosa showed mononuclear inflammatory cells in the lamina propria. Immunoperoxidase staining showed C pylori as dark brown, curved, or spiralled bodies within the gastric mucus, adherent to the epithelial cell surface and inside the antral glands. Brush smears of antral gastric mucosa showed curved and spiral Gram negative micro-organisms. Preformed urease tests were positive in biopsy specimens from fundus, body and antrum, and negative from oxyphagus and duodenum. Culture of the biopsy specimens from gastric fundus, body and antrum showed a heavy growth of C pylori. The micro-organism had in vitro sensitivity to amoxicillin. No growth was observed in culture of specimens from oxyphagus and duodenum. The patient was treated with oral amoxicillin (750 mg/day as three equal portions every eight hours, for one month). Within one week of treatment the symptoms disappeared. Biopsy specimens after treatment showed antral mild residual gastritis (fig 1b). C pylori was not shown by immunoperoxidase technique, and Gram stain, preformed urease test, or by culture.

The patient presented a clinical, endoscopic, and histological picture of acute gastritis that was associated with C pylori. We believe that C pylori might be a more common causative agent of acute gastritis than previously thought.

A JA BARBOSA*
DULCIENE MM QUEIROZ†
EN MENDES†
GA ROCHA†
ANFRISINA ST CARVALHO†
MARIZA LV ROQUETE†
†Department of Pathology, Laboratory of Research in Bacteriology, and Department of Pediatrics, Faculdade de Medicina da UFMG, 30130 Belo Horizonte, Brazil

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A J Barbosa, D M Queiroz, E N Mendes, G A Rocha, A S Carvalho and M L Roquete

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