NOT ALL THAT’S COVID-19 IS RESPIRATORY:
Typhlitis, a potential atypical gastrointestinal manifestation of COVID-19

Aditi Basnet¹, MD, MPHTM; Moisés Vargas¹ MD, and Victoria C. Costales¹ MD, MPH

1. Departments of Internal Medicine/Preventive Medicine, Griffin Hospital

1. INTRODUCTION

An estimated 10% of COVID-19 patients exhibit gastrointestinal symptoms. Typhlitis or neutropenic enterocolitis (NE), is a life-threatening, necrotizing enterocolitis with high mortality rates, primarily seen among severely myelosuppressed oncologic patients. We report a case of an immunocompetent patient diagnosed with COVID-19, who subsequently developed typhlitis, a potential, atypical gastrointestinal manifestation of COVID-19.

2. CASE DESCRIPTION

- 70-year-old male with history of cardiovascular disease, admitted to the Intensive Care Unit for mechanical ventilation and management of COVID-19.
- Admission Day 20: The patient developed rectal bleeding with significant labs and imaging comprised of Bacteriodes bacteremia, cecal thickening and pericecal infiltration on CT (Image 1).
- He was started on ampicillin/sulbactam for presumed typhlitis.
- Suspicion for malignancy was raised as an explanation for the typhlitis given the patient’s elevated CEA levels and a colonoscopy showing a diffuse right-sided colonic mass. Biopsy results showed no evidence of malignancy.
- The patient’s respiratory and GI symptoms subsequently resolved prior to discharge. A repeat post-discharge CT 3 months later showed resolution of colonic thickening (Image 2).

3. DISCUSSION

- Neutropenic enterocolitis is a rare and severe clinical syndrome of abdominal pain, fever, and diarrhea, that occurs in less than 5% of immunosuppressed patients with malignancies and absolute neutrophil count <500.
- NE-causing microorganisms are mostly polymicrobial with P. aeruginosa, E. coli, Klebsiella spp, Bacteroides spp, Candida spp and Clostridium spp. being the most commonly isolated organisms.
- Our case supports the possibility of typhlitis as a rare GI manifestation of COVID-19 and is the only one of its kind to the best of our knowledge
- Given the high mortality rates of typhlitis (estimated to be >50%), early recognition and treatment with broad-spectrum antibiotics covering enteric gram-negative and anaerobic organisms are paramount to potentially achieving a good outcome, similar to our patient.

4. REFERENCES