

## **A LETHAL CONSEQUENCE OF CONSUMPTION OF FISH; COULD IT HAVE BEEN PREVENTED?**

**D.M.G. Fernando\***, M.H.M.A. Izzath and R.P. Jayasooriya

*Department of Forensic Medicine, Faculty of Medicine, University of Peradeniya,  
Sri Lanka*

*\*dineshmgfdo@yahoo.com*

An aorto-esophageal fistula is a life-threatening cause of gastrointestinal bleeding, where an abnormal communication between the oesophagus and the aorta may be caused by thoracic aortic aneurysm, foreign body ingestion, oesophageal malignancy, or post-operative complications. The diagnosis can be made on the basis of clinical findings alone. Classically, patients with the triad of mid thoracic pain, sentinel arterial haemorrhage and exsanguination after a symptom-free interval (Chiari's triad). Diagnostic and treatment protocols differ from those of other sources of gastrointestinal bleeding. As a result, emergency physicians should be aware of the presentation and management of patients with aorto-esophageal fistula. Aorto-esophageal fistulas secondary to foreign body ingestion are rare and frequently lethal. However, survival is now possible with rapid surgical intervention. A 36 year old male, was admitted to hospital complaining of mid thoracic pain following a history of fish bone ingestion. He was treated for gastritis and discharged after five days. One week later he was admitted again complaining of epigastric pain and haematemesis. Despite vigorous resuscitation and emergency surgery, he exsanguinated and died within a few hours. Autopsy revealed an impacted fish bone in the oesophagus creating an aorto-esophageal fistula which resulted in haemorrhagic shock. Primary aorto-esophageal fistula is a very rare but catastrophic condition that is frequently missed. A high index of suspicion is needed for early diagnosis, which will improve the chance of survival. Also we advise the public to seek early medical attention following foreign body ingestion to prevent this fatal complication.