Massive Barium Sulfate Aspiration in the Bronchial Tree

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Picture.

A 75-year-old man was referred to our respiratory department from his local hospital due to the massive aspiration of barium sulfate during his annual checkup with esophagogastroduodenography. He had suffered from a subdural hematoma seven years previously, but had no apparent history of aspiration pneumonia and/or swallowing disorders. The physical examination indicated coarse crackles in the bilateral lower lung fields. A chest X-ray taken 2 hours after the aspiration (Picture) showed that the barium sulfate was located in the segmental and sub-segmental branches of the bronchial tree of the lower lobes bilaterally, as well as in the smaller airways, thus resulting in a tree-in-bud appearance. In contrast to hydrosoluble contrast media (e.g., gastrografin), barium sulfate is not irritable to the lung (1). How-

ever, physicians should be aware that massive aspiration may sometimes be fatal, especially in elderly patients, who initially present with a rapid progressive cough, followed by fever, tachypnea, and hypotension (2).

The authors state that they have no Conflict of Interest (COI).

References

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