Reviewer's report

Title: Management of gastro-bronchial fistula complicating a near-total esophagectomy: Case report

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Reviewer: C S Pramesh

Reviewer's report:

The authors describe an interesting case of a bronchogastric fistula complicating near total esophagectomy, successfully managed by conservative treatment. Bronchogastric fistulas are rare, potentially fatal complications and any addition to the existing literature is an important contribution. This is also the first case where conservative treatment was successful and I believe the key was appropriate case selection. The bronchoscopic images show a clean fistula with no associated inflammation with a near normal bronchial mucosa around the fistula. I agree with the authors' conclusion that this was probably a result of a combination of two factors: first, the relative ischemia caused by the neoadjuvant chemoradiation, and secondly, extensive dissection of lymph nodes around the carina, worsening the tracheobronchial ischemia. The location of the fistula (postero medial wall) suggests the above aetiology. Another potential cause (though unlikely in this case) is a vagrant staple from the stapled stomach tube eroding into and migrating to the tracheobronchial tube - we have had two such cases following which we now routinely over-run the stomach tube staple line!

The message this report conveys is that, in carefully selected cases (where there is not much pulmonary soilage from the fistula, there is no associated inflammation of the tracheobronchial tree, and the patient is stable from a respiratory point of view), there may be a role of conservative management especially with regular monitoring of the status of the fistula and the general condition of the patient.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests