LIPIODOL IN THE DIAGNOSIS OF CONGENITAL ŒSOPHAGEAL ATRESIA

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Two infants, aged 12 and 6 days at the time of death, were admitted to the Hospital for Sick Children, Great Ormond Street, with the history of 'going blue and suffocating' on attempting to take food. The injection of...
5 c.cm. of lipiodol into the oesophagus during life was successful in establishing by radiography the diagnosis of atresia of the oesophagus in both cases. In practice this may be performed with the aid of fluoroscopy. The accompanying radiograms demonstrate the conditions found on admission to hospital.

Fig. 2. Case 1.—Above, the blind oesophagus is seen. Below, the oesophagus leads out of the trachea just above its bifurcation.

In Case 1 (investigated June, 1932), skiagrams during life showed a blind end to the oesophagus with a little lipiodol both in the stomach and in the lungs (Fig. 1). A post-mortem examination in this infant revealed complete atresia of the oesophagus with a communication extending from the bifurcation of the trachea to the lower portion of the oesophagus (Fig. 2).

It was thus evident that the lipiodol present in the lungs and stomach of this infant in the ante-mortem skiagrams had spilt over from the upper end of the oesophagus into the trachea, thus finding its way into the bronchial tree and, through the fistula, into the stomach,
In Case 2 (investigated October, 1932), the ante-mortem radiograms suggested complete atresia of the oesophagus (Fig. 3). It was not possible to obtain a post-mortem examination in this case, but post-mortem radiography after the injection of lipiodol into the trachea, and into the oesophagus from above and below, was sufficient to show the existence of complete atresia without tracheo-oesophageal fistula (Fig. 4).

**Fig. 3. Case 2.—Ante-mortem radiography.** The oesophagus which is dilated, ends blindly at the level of the sixth costal cartilage.

**Discussion.**

This aid to the diagnosis of congenital oesophageal atresia, also reported upon by Reid soon after the beginning of our work, is of more than academic interest. The clinician, confronted with a new-born infant presenting the symptoms of choking and cyanosis on feeding, may be required to give a definite diagnosis of congenital atresia, a diagnosis which carries with it an invariably fatal prognosis. Radiological confirmation of his diagnosis may be valuable. The expectation of life of the 250 or more cases which have been reported since the condition was originally described by Durston in 1670 does not, in the absence of surgical intervention so far considered inadvisable, exceed 13 days. It is of interest that the two infants reported here present examples of both types of congenital atresia known to occur. The first case is an example of the commoner variety, namely, atresia with tracheo-oesophageal fistula. This occurs in 84 to 92 per cent. of recorded cases.
instances\textsuperscript{3- 4}, and only about 10 per cent (of which the second case is an example) consist of simple atresia without fistula. For a discussion of the probable mechanism producing atresia of the cesophagus in the newborn, reference may be made to the writings of Keith and Spicer\textsuperscript{5} and of Sheldon\textsuperscript{6}.

We are indebted to Dr. Poynton for permission to publish these two cases, and to Dr. Shires for help in the interpretation of the radiograms.

\textbf{Fig. 4.} Case 2.—Post-mortem radiography. First the blind cesophagus was filled with sodium iodide. Subsequently the bronchial tree was injected. If a tracheo-cesophageal fistula had been present some of the opaque fluid would have passed into the stomach.

\textbf{REFERENCES.}