A REVIEW ON PLEURAL EFFUSION

Priyanka Gaikwad[1*], Akshada Walunj[2], Anushka Navale[3], Piyush Jangam[4], Yogesh Bafana[5]

Student[1-3], Assi. Professor[4], Principal[5]
Rays Foundations, Arihant College of Pharmacy, Kedgaon, Ahmednagar, MH, India.

Abstract:An excessive accumulation of fluid in the pleural space is known as a pleural effusion. Because it may be connected to pleural or lung illnesses, as well as systemic disorders, it may present a diagnostic challenge to the treating doctor. Patients typically complain of dyspnea, initially brought on by exertion, a mostly dry cough, and pleuritic chest pain. Finding the cause of a pleural effusion is crucial for proper treatment. In approximately 20% of instances, the cause of pleural effusion is still unknown. For brand-new, unexplained pleural effusions, a thoracocentesis ought to be done. To differentiate between an exudate and a transudate of pleural fluid, laboratories are often used. Chemical, microbiological, and cytological analyses are all part of the diagnostic examination of pleural effusion and might offer additional details about the origin of the disease process. Increased diagnostic precision is offered by immunohistochemistry. The most common method for treating transudative effusions is to address the underlying medical condition. To give symptomatic relief, a substantial, refractory pleural effusion—whether an exudate or a transudate—must be drained. The underlying etiology of the effusion affects how the exudative effusion should be managed. Malignant effusions are typically drained to relieve symptoms, and pleurodesis may be necessary to stop them from returning. Pleural biopsy is advised for the assessment and exclusion of various etiologies, such as malignancy or tuberculosis. The most straightforward, least expensive, and least complicated type of pleural biopsy is percutaneous closed pleural biopsy, which ought to be utilized frequently. Intercostal drainage and the proper antibiotics must be used to treat empyemas. When a drainage operation fails to improve the condition, restore lung function, or close a bronchopleural fistula, surgery may be required in some instances.

Keywords: Thoracocentesis, Biopsy, Thoracoscopy, Decortication, Pleural effusion.

Introduction

A pleural effusion, or an excessive buildup of fluid in the pleural space, is a sign that the clearance and creation of pleural fluid are out of balance. Pleural fluid buildup is a symptom of underlying illness rather than a specific disease. Pleural effusions are associated with a wide range of pleural, pulmonary, and systemic diseases. As a result, a patient with pleural effusion may see a general internist, rheumatologist, gastroenterologist, nephrologist, or surgeon in addition to a pulmonologist. Finding the origin of the pleural effusion is crucial for proper treatment. In about 75% of patients, an etiological diagnosis can be made based on the pleural fluid cytology, biochemistry, and clinical presentation. Despite a diagnostic workup, the reason is still unknown in up to 20% of instances.

Recent research reveals potential causes of pleural effusion and offers suggestions for essential studies. A history of pneumonia may indicate complicated (empyema or empyema-like) or uncomplicated parapneumonic effusion. Fever is a sign of an infectious cause. Transudative effusion may be suggested by a history of cardiac, renal, or hepatic dysfunction. Malignant pleural effusion is a diagnosis that is supported by advanced age, weight loss, and a history of smoking. An effusion connected to a pulmonary embolism may be caused by recent leg edema or deep vein thrombosis. Hemothorax or chylothorax can occur as a result of trauma. The cause of a benign or malignant effusion linked to mesothelioma may have previously involved asbestos exposure. Recent esophageal procedures or a history of binge drinking point to an esophageal rupture-related pleural effusion. Ascites is a physical condition that can be a sign of cirrhosis, ovarian cancer, or Meigs syndrome.3 Up to 3 weeks after heart surgery, patients who experience fever, dyspnea, and pleuritic chest pain should be evaluated for postcardiac damage syndrome.4 Bilateral leg swelling is linked to transudates, such as those brought on by heart or liver failure, while unilateral leg swelling can strongly suggest pulmonary embolism. Pericarditis causes a pericardial friction rub. A probable etiology for certain long-term drugs, such as amiodarone, methotrexate, phenytoin, nitrofurantoin, and isoniazid6, is suggested by history and symptoms indicative of connective tissue disease. Pleural effusions are abnormal collections of fluid in the pleural space, which is a potential space between the parietal (chest cavity) pleura and the visceral (lung) pleura. Normally, the pleural space contains a small amount of fluid having a low protein concentration of 1 g/dL that is formed in the apical region of the parietal pleura and is drained through the lymphatic system. Very little fluid moves across the visceral pleura, except in the presence of pulmonary venous hypertension. Pleural effusions may be transudates caused by an imbalance of hydrostatic and oncotic pressures across intact vasculature or exudates resulting from fluid moving across leaky blood vessels into the pleural space.

Fig. No. 1 Pleural effusion

Causes

- A wide range of things can cause a pleural effusion. Some of the more common ones are:
- Leaking from other organs. This usually happens if you have congestive heart failure, when your heart doesn't pump blood to your body properly. But it can also come from liver or kidney disease, when fluid builds up in your body and leaks into the pleural space.
- Cancer. Usually lung cancer is the problem, but other cancers that have spread to the lung or pleura can cause it, too.
- Infections. Some illnesses that lead to pleural effusion are pneumonia or tuberculosis.
- Autoimmune conditions. Lupus or rheumatoid arthritis are some diseases that can cause it.
- AD
- Pulmonary embolism. This is a blockage in an artery in one of your lungs, and it can lead to pleural effusion.

Symptoms

- You might not have any. You're more likely to have symptoms when a pleural effusion is moderate or large-sized, or if there is also inflammation.
- If you do have symptoms, they may include:
- Shortness of breath
- Chest pain, especially when breathing in deeply (This is called pleurisy or pleuritic pain.)
- Fever

Diagnosis

The main goal of employing different diagnostic approaches is to differentiate different causes for pleural effusion such as ruling out immune dysfunction or other underlying systemic or local pulmonary disorders. The amount of fluid present and the underlying reason affect the clinical appearance of pleural effusion. The majority of individuals are asymptomatic when a pleural effusion is found. Pleuritic chest discomfort, dyspnea, and a dry, ineffective cough are examples of potential symptoms. Pleural inflammation of the parietal pleura brought on by movement-related friction between the two pleural surfaces is what causes the chest pain connected to pleural effusion.2 Chest pain from pleurisy can be localized or referred. Typically, heavy breathing, coughing, and sneezing all because the pleural surfaces to shift, which aggravates the pain. With chest strapping or fluid buildup, the pain subsides. In order to narrow the differential diagnosis, a thorough history and physical examination are crucial because dyspnea and chest discomfort are nonspecific symptoms.

Fig. no. 2 Herbal drugs

Fig. no. 3 Herbal drugs Remedy

Herbal drugs

To decrease pleural effusion and prevent further deterioration of renal function, we prescribed oral Saireito (an herbal substitute for anti-inflammatory agents and diuretics) at an initial dose of 9 g/day, because long-term use of anti-inflammatory agents and diuretics often causes renal damage. Medications may be used to treat pleural effusion depending on its cause and symptoms. Types of medications used may include: Antibiotics if there is an infection. Steroids and Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs to relieve pain and reduce inflammation or swelling.

History

History provides information about the possible etiology of pleural effusion and guidelines for necessary investigations. A history of pneumonia suggests parapneumonic effusion, either complicated (empyema or empyema-like) or uncomplicated. Fever indicates an infective etiology. A history of cardiac, renal, or liver impairment can suggest transudative effusion. Older age, weight loss, and a history of smoking point towards a diagnosis of malignant pleural effusion. Recent leg swelling or deep vein thrombosis may result in an effusion related to pulmonary embolism. Trauma may result in hemothorax or chylothorax. Previous exposure to asbestos may be the cause of benign or malignant effusion related to mesothelioma. Recent esophageal procedures or history of alcohol binging suggest pleural effusion related to esophageal rupture. Physical findings such as ascites may indicate cirrhosis, ovarian cancer, or Meigs syndrome. Postcardiac injury syndrome should be considered in cases of fever, dyspnea, and pleuritic chest pain up to 3 weeks following cardiac surgery.[4] Unilateral leg swelling can strongly indicate pulmonary embolism, and bilateral leg swelling is associated with transudates, such as those caused by heart or liver failure. A pericardial friction rub occurs in pericarditis. History and findings suggestive of connective tissue disease, and certain long-term medications, including amiodarone, methotrexate, phenytoin, nitrofurantoin, and isoniazid, suggests that as a possible etiology.

Pathophysiology

Both the visceral and the parietal pleura play an important role in fluid homeostasis in the pleural space. The mean rate of both the production and the absorption of pleural fluid is normally 0.2 mL/kg/hr, which implies that the entire volume of the pleural fluid normally turns over within one hour. The parietal side of the pleura accounts for most of the production of pleural fluid, and for most of its resorption as well. Pleural effusion due to left-heart failure is an exception to this rule, in which the fluid comes from the visceral pleura. The volume of the pleural fluid is determined by the balance of the hydrostatic and oncotic pressure differences that are present between the systemic and pulmonary circulation and the pleural space. Pleural fluid is resorbed via lymphatic vessels in the parietal pleura. The flow in these vessels can increase by a factor of 20 if more than the usual amount of pleural fluid

is produced; thus, the pleural lymphatic resorbing system has a large reserve capacity. In health, the production and resorption of pleural fluid are at equilibrium. A pleural effusion represents a disturbance of this equilibrium, probably because of both increased production and decreased resorption. Low oncotic pressure (e.g., in hypoalbuminemia), elevated pulmonary capillary pressure, increased permeability, lymphatic obstruction, and diminished negative intrapleural pressure are all pathophysiological components that lead to the clinically relevant and distinguishing features of a pleural effusion—transudate vs. exudate.

The most common symptom arising from a pleural inflammatory response is pleuritic pain, which is mediated by the parietal pleura (the visceral pleura contains no nociceptors or nociceptive nerve fibers). The pain is usually felt in the region of the pathological abnormality, and it is often linked to the respiratory cycle. Such localized pleuritic pain improves or disappears as soon as a pleural effusion arises. Some patients describe a diffuse, painful sensation of pressure in the chest—particularly when the pathological process directly involves the parietal pleura, e.g., in the case of a pleural empyema, a primary malignant tumor, or pleural crcinomatosis. Pleural effusions in these situations are usually of the exudative type.

The most common symptom of pleural effusion is dyspnea. The severity of dyspnea is only loosely correlated with the size of the effusion. Large pleural effusions take up space in the chest that is normally filled by pulmonary parenchyma and are thus associated with a diminution of all lung volumes. Nor do the lung volumes immediately change when a pleural effusion (even a large one) is drained. The rapid clinical improvement of dyspnea after a pleural effusion is drained probably reflects the transition to a more favorable length-tension curve of the respiratory muscles, particularly the diaphragm. Some patients complain of a dry cough, which can be explained as a manifestation of pleural inflammation or lung compression due to a large effusion. Pleural effusions can also markedly impair the quality of sleep.

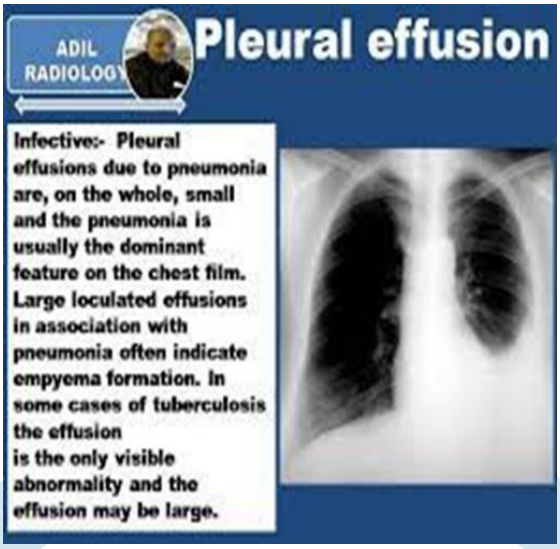
Physical examination

Physical findings are signs of volume gain, reduced tactile vocal fremitus and dullness on percussion, shifting dullness, and diminished or absent breath sounds. Shifting dullness will be absent with massive and loculated effusions. Massive pleural effusions present with respiratory embarrassment and signs of mediastinal shift. Other findings may be related to associate systemic disease. Percutaneous pleural biopsies are of greatest value in the diagnosis of granulomatous and malignant diseases of the pleura. They are performed on patients with undiagnosed exudative effusions and nondiagnostic cytology, and when there is clinical suspicion of tuberculosis or malignancy. The biopsy specimens should be placed in 10% formaldehyde for histological examination and sterile saline for tuberculosis culture. When obtaining biopsies from focal areas of pleural nodularity shown on contrast-enhanced CT scans, image guidance should be used. Image-guided pleural biopsy is the investigation of choice in cases of malignant mesothelioma, with a sensitivity of 86% and a specificity of 100%.The procedure can be performed as a blind percutaneous needle biopsy or through thoracoscopy or open thoracotomy.

Closed percutaneous needle biopsy has traditionally been performed to investigate the etiology of exudative pleural effusion, and was first described in 1958. Abrams and Copes pleural biopsy needles are most commonly used for the procedure. At least four samples need to be taken to optimize diagnostic accuracy. Cowie et al, in a large study of 750 needle biopsies, reported a 90% success rate in obtaining pleural tissue. Complications of pleural biopsy include site pain (1%–15%), pneumothorax (3%–15%), vasovagal reaction (1%–5%), hemothorax (<2%), site hematoma (<1%), and transient fever (<1%). If a pneumothorax is caused, only 1% of cases require chest drainage. Morrone et al compared these two needles in a small randomized study of 24 patients, and the diagnostic yield was similar, but samples were larger with an Abrams needle although not with better diagnostic performance. A Copes needle is easy to use, less expensive, and results in fewer complications. All grades of junior medical staff can perform this procedure following suitable training. In view of low cost, easy availability, and very low complication rates, closed pleural biopsy is a very important diagnostic tool for physicians and should be used routinely. Closed pleural biopsy should be offered to all patients with exudative pleural effusion, and thoracoscopic procedures should be reserved for cases that remain undiagnosed. Pleural effusions are abnormal collections of fluid in the pleural space, which is a potential space between the parietal (chest cavity) pleura and the visceral (lung) pleura. Normally, the pleural space contains a small amount of fluid having a low protein concentration of 1 g/dL that is formed in the apical region of the parietal pleura and is drained through the lymphatic system. Very little fluid moves across the visceral pleura, except in the presence of pulmonary venous hypertension. Pleural effusions may be transudates caused by an imbalance of hydrostatic and oncotic pressures across intact vasculature or exudates resulting from fluid moving across leaky blood vessels into the pleural space.

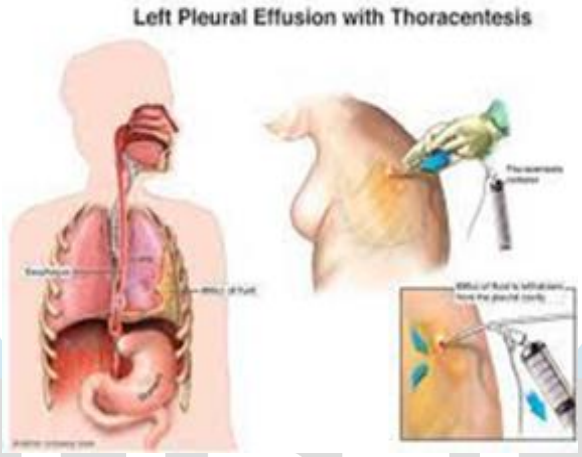
X-ray

The chest radiograph is the simplest and least expensive method of identifying a PE but it is not specific. Obliteration of the costophrenic sinus is the earliest radiological sign of pleural fluid accumulation. Larger PEs create a fluid stripe and a shift of the mediastinum to the opposite side. A lateral decubitus film with the child lying on the affected side provides valuable information about the quantity and quality of effusion.



Thoracentesis

Routine thoracentesis is a simple and safe method for determining the cause of an effusion. Thoracentesis should be performed whenever the cause of the effusion is uncertain. It is unnecessary if the PE is associated with congestive heart failure, nephrotic syndrome, or ascites. The detection of pus establishes the presence of an empyema that requires drainage. Malodorous pus indicates the presence of anaerobic pathogens.



Epidemiology

Pediatrics pleural effusion is more common in boys than in girls and also in younger children in comparison with older ones. The incidence of pleural effusion in children is directly depended on the type of underlying disease. Massive pleural effusion led to empyema can be appeared in about 0.6-2% of children with bacterial pneumonia. Tuberculosis pleural effusion commonly occurs in adolescents and is uncommon in the preschool-aged child. The distribution of pleural effusion according to the population studies is now increasing in most industrial countries. As, in the United States, the empyema-associated hospitalization rate has increased from 2.2 per 100,000 in 1997 to 3.7 per 100,000 children in 2006. In a study on Spanish population, the incidence of infectious pleural effusion in children younger than age 5 years increased from 1.7 per 100,000 in 1999 to 8.5 per 100,000 in 2004 (28). In France, the incidence of empyema increased from 0.5 per 100,000 in 1995 to 13 per 100,000 in 2003.

- Thoracentesis is not required for the diagnosis of PE secondary to HF. Thoracentesis should only be performed when clinical signs or imaging studies are atypical or a second underlying cause of PE is suspected. PF can be a transudate. High NT-proBNP levels support diagnosis of PE secondary to HF but are not conclusive. Conversely, low NT-proBNP levels exclude this etiology.

- The sensitivity of cytology and closed pleural biopsy for the diagnosis of MPE is low. Diagnostic performance improves with image-guided pleural biopsy.

- PF culture has a low diagnostic performance. In the presence of a non-purulent IPE, there are no parameters that predict those that will progress into complicated IPE/empyema. A pH in PF <7.20 is an indication for thoracic drainage.

- Diagnosis of TBPE requires the presence of *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* in sputum, PF, pleural biopsy, or caseating granulomas in the latter. In an adequate clinical context, a lymphocytic-rich exudate with elevated ADA in PF supports diagnosis of tuberculosis.

- Diagnosis of chylothorax requires demonstration of chylomicrons in PF or triglycerides >110 mg/dL.
- A detailed clinical and work history, a careful physical examination and evaluation of imaging studies and PF laboratory tests are crucial to determine the etiology of a PE, especially when it is caused by rare diseases.
- Although most undiagnosed PE are benign, follow-up is recommended, as it will be a MPE in a small proportion of patients.

Types

You may hear your doctor use the terms "transudative" and "exudative" to describe the two main types of pleural effusions.

Transudative. This pleural effusion fluid is similar to the fluid you normally have in your pleural space. It forms from liquid leaking across normal pleura. This type rarely needs to be drained unless it's very large. Congestive heart failure is the most common cause of this type.

Exudative. This forms from extra liquid, protein, blood, inflammatory cells or sometimes bacteria that leak across damaged blood vessels into the pleura. You may need to get it drained, depending on its size and how much inflammation there is. The causes of this type include pneumonia and lung cancer.

Treatment

Treatment of both transudative and exudative effusions should be directed at the underlying cause. Exudative effusions frequently also require removal of the pleural fluid for symptomatic relief. The treatment of non-inflammatory PE is basic supportive therapy of the functional disturbances and management of the underlying disorders. When a PE is caused by fluid overload as in cardiac or renal failure, the transudate can often be successfully managed with diuretics and fluid management. Repeated thoracentesis or tube drainage of these transudates is rarely necessary in children

Conclusion

Although pleural effusion in children is a rare finding and is asymptomatic in most affected children, but in conditions with an excessive fluid collection, it may be complicated with empyema or other serious complications leading high rates of morbidity and even morbidity. Thus, selection of the best management approach including removal of underlying diseases, supportive cares, selection of proper antibiotics, and invasive approaches if required can result in favorable outcome. Different systemic, inflammatory, infectious, and malignant diseases can result in pleural effusions. A combination of medical history, physical examination, imaging tests, and relevant pleural fluid analyses, including specific biomarkers (e.g., natriuretic peptides for heart failure, adenosine deaminase for tuberculosis, or mesothelin for mesothelioma) determine the precise etiological diagnosis of these conditions. When one or more pleural fluid tests fail to reveal the presence of a persistent symptom, invasive techniques such pleuroscopic biopsies may be necessary. Nonetheless, image-guided biopsies must to be tried initially whenever there is parietal pleural thickening or nodularity. The present diagnostic strategy for pleural effusions caused by heart failure, pneumonia, malignancy, tuberculosis, and other uncommon illnesses is reviewed in this article.

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