Colorectal polyps: a frequently-missed cause of rectal bleeding in Egyptian children

Departments of Pediatrics, Cairo University, Egypt.

Abstract

Objectives: Colorectal polyps are important causes of rectal bleeding but they have been infrequently reported in Egyptian children. The prevalence and characteristics of colorectal polyps in a consecutive cohort of Egyptian children with rectal bleeding are presented.

Methods: A total of 174 children aged 2?12 years [mean (SD) 6·4 (3·7)] with fresh rectal bleeding were enrolled prospectively. Rectal examination, laboratory investigations and fibre-optic colonoscopy were performed in all patients.

Results: The source of bleeding was diagnosed as colorectal polyps in 100 patients (57·4%) and was owing to other causes in 74. The interval between onset of symptoms and presentation ranged from 2 to 48 months [mean (SD) 18·3 (16)]. In patients with other causes, rectal bleeding was attributed to intestinal amoebiasis (42), diarrhoea/dysentery (18), severe constipation (2) and intestinal schistosomiasis (2). Polyps were solitary in 56 children (56%) and ranged from 2 to 5 in 34 (34%) and >5 in 10 (10%). Polyps were confined to the rectum in 68 children, were rectosigmoid in 20, in the descending colon in 8, and splenic flexure in 4. Polyps were juvenile in 84 children (84%), inflammatory in 10 (10%) and hyperplastic, schistosomal or adenomatous in 2 each (6%). Colonoscopic polypectomy was successful and arrested the bleeding in all cases.

Conclusion: In Egyptian children, colorectal polyps are relatively common and an easily treatable cause of fresh rectal bleeding. They should be high on the list of differential diagnoses.

Keywords: children; rectal bleeding; Egyptian children; Colorectal polyps

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