

Rectal perforation and necrosis associated with fleet enema: two rare case

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ABSTRACT

Hypertonic sodium phosphate enemas can be effective and are commonly used to treat constipation in both hospital and community settings. While they are over-the-counter medicine in Australia, the adverse effects, though rare, can cause significant morbidity and mortality of patients. The most common adverse effects are water electrolyte disturbance. Meanwhile, rectal enema injury can be the consequence of the initial mucosal laceration from the tip of the nozzle. The extravasation of the hypertonic phosphate solution can exacerbate mucosal necrosis, and subsequently cause localized perforation. Only a small handful of case series of perforation of rectum and sigmoid colon caused by enemas have been reported, but it can be catastrophic. This case series demonstrates two rare cases of enema-related complications. More importantly, it highlights the importance of a careful clinical history, examination, and suspicion for patients who present with abdominal pain, rectal bleeding, and fevers, especially in the context of recent administration of enemas. In addition, CT evident extraluminal air is the hallmark finding of perforation of the rectosigmoid colon. Failure to appreciate the symptoms and signs of rectal injury can potentially result in delay in the initiation of appropriate medical and surgical treatments.

BIOGRAPHY

Dr Chi Fai Tsang has completed his BMedMD from the University of New South Wales, Australia. He is currently in training in General Surgery in Sydney.



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