Pulmonary embolism associated with the act of defecation. “The bed pan syndrome”

Abstract

Pulmonary embolism as the cause of death is frequent in a hospital setting. The authors report on seven cases of fatal pulmonary embolism that occurred during or after defecation, which they referred to as the Bed Pan Syndrome. A retrospective autopsy study for the three years 2015-2017 was done on all deaths reported as pulmonary embolism. During the period of study 1778 autopsies were performed and eighty one (81) deaths were recorded as pulmonary embolism, which represented 4.6% of the cause of death during the period of study. Seven cases or 8.6% of those dying from pulmonary embolism, died suddenly during the act of defecation. The mean age of patient in this study was 64.7 years. Diabetes Mellitus and Essential hypertension were co-morbidities in 42.9% of cases. Pulmonary embolism associated with the act of defecation is seldom reported in the medical literature and the seven (7) such cases are the subject of discussion in this presentation.

Keywords: pulmonary embolism, bed pan syndrome, act of defecation, autopsy

Introduction

Deep vein thrombosis and pulmonary embolism are common events in a clinical setting. These events often lead to morbidity and mortality and although preventative measures have been instituted, these events occur regularly. In autopsy based studies pulmonary embolism accounts for 1.25% to 10.88% of all cause of death. In most of these deaths, deep vein thrombosis might have heralded the fatal event of pulmonary embolism which clinically presents with swelling and discomfort of limbs, chest discomfort and breathing difficulties. Pulmonary embolism associated with the act of defecation is seldom reported in the literature. This mode of presentation of pulmonary embolism is often fatal and physicians should be aware of this clinical sign of pulmonary embolism.

Material and methods

A retrospective study off all deaths that were autopsied and recorded as pulmonary embolism were undertaken for the years 2015-2017 from a Public Hospital in Trinidad W.I. The authors also collected all the available demographics and clinical data of the cases. From this group of deaths, those dying from pulmonary embolism associated with the act of defecation were isolated. Table 1 shows the seven cases and their clinical demographics.

Results

During the study period 2015-2017, 1778 autopsies were performed and 81 cases of pulmonary embolism as the cause of death were recorded. Seven cases of pulmonary embolism or 8.64 % were recorded to have occurred during or after defecation. There were five females and two males amongst the group studied and their age’s ranges from 34 years to 89 years with a mean of 64.7 years (Table 1).

One patient had suffered a fractured hip and had recent fixation, while one had undergone recent radical prostatectomy for cancer of the prostate gland. One had metastatic gastric cancer and three

Discussion

Pulmonary embolism is a frequent cause of death in a hospital setting and has a reported incidence as high as 10.88%-12.6% Pulmonary embolism often presents with chest discomfort, tightness, pain and difficulty in breathing. The clinical conditions frequently recorded in which pulmonary embolism occurs are deep vein thrombosis, following long journey in confined spaces such as aircrafts,
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Conflict of interest
Authors declare there is no conflict of interest.

References

Citation: Daisley H, Rampersad A, Meyers DJ. Pulmonary embolism associated with the act of defecation. “The bed pan syndrome”. J Lung Pulm Respir Res. 2018;5(2):74–75. DOI: 10.15406/jlpr.2018.05.00165