INTRODUCTION

In current human medical practice, endoscopists, radiologists, and gastrointestinal surgeons frequently report the presence of a redundant colon as a secondary finding on gastrointestinal exploration and procedures. The general medical consensus defines dolichocolon as an anatomic abnormality involving an elongated colon with redundancies in one or more segments of the colon. The extra length forms tortuosities and kinks, and it is often related to constipation and abdominal discomfort. The real prevalence of dolichocolon in humans is unknown, mainly due to a lack of population-based investigations, with most publications on dolichocolon being case reports and low-level case series. While the etiology remains unclear, some reports suggest a possible congenital etiology. However, studies in mice indicate that the bowel's fecal transport characteristics could contribute to the pathogenesis of dolichocolon.

Dolichocolon is a known cause of slow transit constipation in humans. The clinical presentation reported here in a rhesus macaque closely resembles that of intestinal adenocarcinoma, the most common neoplasia in macaques. Dolichocolon should be considered in differential diagnosis of macaques with anorexia, weight loss, and constipation.

KEYWORDS: colon, dolichocolon, non-human primates, redundant colon, rhesus macaque

CASE REPORT

Dolichocolon (redundant colon) in a rhesus macaque (Macaca mulatta)

Diego Celdran-Bonafonte | Kathryn A. O’Connell | Katalin M. Gothard |
Iman Ghaderi | David Besselsen | Cynthia J. Doane

1University Animal Care, The University of Arizona, Tucson, USA
2Department of Physiology, The University of Arizona, Tucson, USA
3Department of Surgery, The University of Arizona, Tucson, USA

Correspondence
Diego Celdran-Bonafonte, University Animal Care, The University of Arizona, P.O. Box 245092, Tucson, Arizona, USA. Email: dceldran@arizona.edu

Abstract

Dolichocolon (redundant colon) is an underdiagnosed cause of severe constipation in humans. The clinical presentation reported here in a rhesus macaque closely resembles that of intestinal adenocarcinoma, the most common neoplasia in macaques. Dolichocolon should be considered in differential diagnosis of macaques with anorexia, weight loss, and constipation.

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1 INTRODUCTION

In current human medical practice, endoscopists, radiologists, and gastrointestinal surgeons frequently report the presence of a redundant colon as a secondary finding on gastrointestinal exploration and procedures. The general medical consensus defines dolichocolon as an anatomic abnormality involving an elongated colon with redundancies in one or more segments of the colon. The extra length forms tortuosities and kinks, and it is often related to constipation and abdominal discomfort. The real prevalence of dolichocolon in humans is unknown, mainly due to a lack of population-based investigations, with most publications on dolichocolon being case reports and low-level case series. While the etiology remains unclear, some reports suggest a possible congenital etiology. However, studies in mice indicate that the bowel's fecal transport characteristics could contribute to the pathogenesis of dolichocolon.

Dolichocolon is a known cause of slow transit constipation in humans. The most frequent symptoms include bloating and abdominal discomfort. Since the symptoms derive from colonic dysfunction and prolonged transit times, the condition is frequently underdiagnosed. A colonic transit study with barium contrast, a radiopaque marker test (sitz marker study) or a CT colonography is required for definitive diagnosis.

2 CASE REPORT

A 10-year-old naive research female rhesus macaque (Macaca mulatta) presented with a 700 g body weight loss during a routine semiannual examination. Abdominal palpation revealed an elongated colon with redundancies in one or more segments of the colon. The extra length formed tortuosities and kinks, and it is often related to constipation and abdominal discomfort. The real prevalence of dolichocolon in humans is unknown, mainly due to a lack of population-based investigations, with most publications on dolichocolon being case reports and low-level case series. While the etiology remains unclear, some reports suggest a possible congenital etiology. However, studies in mice indicate that the bowel's fecal transport characteristics could contribute to the pathogenesis of dolichocolon.

Dolichocolon is a known cause of slow transit constipation in humans. The most frequent symptoms include bloating and abdominal discomfort. Since the symptoms derive from colonic dysfunction and prolonged transit times, the condition is frequently underdiagnosed. A colonic transit study with barium contrast, a radiopaque marker test (sitz marker study) or a CT colonography is required for definitive diagnosis.

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Two weeks later, a follow-up exam revealed an additional weight loss of 600g. The enlarged portion of the GI tract and the fecal accumulation palpated longer (approximately 15cm). A new set of radiographs revealed severe colonic stool burden with gas distention in the proximal small intestine (Figure 1), and no evidence of metastatic nodules in the thorax. Abdominal ultrasound confirmed previous findings and no evidence of endometriosis. Blood biochemistry showed ALT returned to normal range, but lower total protein (5.4 mg/dL) with a considerable drop in globulin (1.5g/dL), while albumin (3.9 g/dL) remained stable. Based on the rapid decline in body weight and the hypoproteinemia an exploratory laparoscopic procedure was scheduled. After a 12h fasting, the animal was sedated with a single dose of ketamine (8 mg/kg IM) and midazolam (0.2 mg/kg IM) and prepared for laparoscopic surgery. Analgesia was provided with Carprofen (4 mg/kg SQ) and a single dose of extended-release buprenorphine (0.2 mg/kg SC). Isoflurane anesthesia was maintained through a 4.5 ED endotracheal tube and mechanical ventilation. The laparoscopic exploration was performed through three 5mm diameters trocars; one was placed in the linea alba (3cm cranially to the umbilicus), and the other two approximately 7cm caudolaterally to the first. Abdominal pressure was maintained at 8mmHg during the exploration. Laparoscopy findings demonstrated no evidence of gastrointestinal neoplasia, but a detailed evaluation of the large intestine revealed the presence of dolichocolon and secondary severe colonic stool burden that involved the entire length of the colon and the distal ileum.

The animal recovered uneventfully, and a more aggressive laxative treatment was initiated by adding sennosides (7.5 mg/PO/SID) to the previously established fiber supplements. Metoclopramide (0.2 mg/kg/PO/SID) was added 72h later. After 7 days of treatment and 2days of abundant fecal production, metoclopramide and sennosides were discontinued. The animal remained on fiber dietary supplements to maintain adequate GI motility. Six weeks later the body weight and blood work had returned to baseline levels, and no evidence of constipation was noted.

Six months later, during the next scheduled routine exam, 50mLs of a highly palatable liquid diet (Ensure®) were syringe fed 2.5h prior to sedation to perform a colon transit study. The study delineated significant colon redundancies that formed kinks and tortuosity, especially along the transverse colon (Figure 2).

3 | DISCUSSION

Rhesus macaques are among the most frequent non-human primate species used in biomedical research and are commonly affected by naturally occurring colon disorders like idiopathic chronic diarrhea\(^9\) and intestinal adenocarcinoma.\(^10-12\) To the knowledge of the authors, this is the first reported case of dolichocolon in this species.

Dolichocolon is generally a benign condition with treatment often centered on the constipation associated with the slow colonic transit. Treatment consists of fiber-rich diet supplementation, adequate water intake to maintain an adequate colonic transit, and support from prokinetic/laxative medication for moderate to severe constipation cases. Surgical intervention is generally not required, and mainly considered when colonic loops are twisted (colonic volvulus). Colonic volvulus can lead to gangrene and perforation and accounts for up to 15% of the human large bowel obstructions in the US and western Europe.\(^13\)

The presentation of redundant colon in this rhesus macaque shares common symptomatology (anorexia, weight loss, constipation, hypoproteinemia, hypoalbuminemia) with the most frequent neoplasia in older rhesus macaques, intestinal adenocarcinoma.\(^11\) Adenocarcinoma is most frequently localized in the cecum, ileocecal junction, and transverse colon, and requires early diagnosis and surgical resection to minimize risk of metastasis. Contrast radiographs can reveal a characteristic annular constricting lesion in cases of intestinal adenocarcinoma, or a segmental stricture at the ileocecal junction that is highly suggestive of malignancy.\(^12\)

Given the frequently benign nature of dolichocolon, the ability to diagnose it via non-invasive techniques (colonic transit studies) and effective dietary/medical management options to control symptoms, this condition has a much more favorable prognosis in
comparison with intestinal adenocarcinoma. Therefore, we believe
dolichocolon should be included in the differential diagnosis of
older rhesus macaques presenting with weight loss and constipa-
tion, to minimize the chances of a misdiagnosis.

The authors confirm that the ethical policies of the journal, as
noted on the journal's author guidelines page, have been adhered
to, and the appropriate ethical review committee approval has been
received. The US National Research Council's guidelines for the Care
and Use of Laboratory Animals were followed.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT
The authors declare no conflict of interest.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT
The data that support the findings of this study are available from
the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

ORCID
Diego Celdran-Bonafonte https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2006-2407
Kathryn A. O’Connell https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9896-9095
Katalin M. Gothard https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9642-2985
Iman Ghaderi https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6723-554X
David Besselsen https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5890-0501

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