

Original Article

Cryptogenic organizing pneumonia associated with invasive pulmonary aspergillosis: a case report and review of the literature

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Abstract: Background: Concomitant occurrence of invasive pulmonary aspergillosis (IPA) with cryptogenic organizing pneumonia (COP) is scarce. Here, we report a case where COP was a presenting feature in a patient with diagnosed IPA, and review additional 58 COP patients reported in the literature from 1988 through 2013. Case outline: The study was reviewed and approved by the Institutional Ethics Committee of Shanghai Tenth People's Hospital of Tongji University and was conducted in compliance with the Helsinki Declaration. Written informed consent was obtained from patient. A 56-year-old man presenting with productive cough for several weeks and unremitting high fever for a week was hospitalized with an initial clinical diagnosis of pneumonia, for which antibiotics were prescribed but did not work. Seeing that the condition progressed both clinically and radiographically, bronchoscopy, bronchoalveolar lavage and lung biopsy were performed, and the diagnosis of cryptogenic organizing pneumonia (COP) and invasive pulmonary aspergillosis (IPA) co-existence was made. Initially, the patient responded to steroid pulse therapy and voriconazole treatment, and his condition was partially improved. However, the patient's condition deteriorated progressively 5 months after the disease onset and the patient died during the third admission due to respiratory failure and the adverse reactions of coriaceous hormone therapy. Conclusion: The diagnosis of cryptogenic organizing pneumonia (COP) and invasive pulmonary aspergillosis (IPA) co-occurrence depends on clinical, radiological and histological presentations. Similarities with other disease processes could lead to a delayed diagnosis or misdiagnosis. The present case suggests that clinicians should be alert to this disease in their clinical practices.

Keywords: Cryptogenic organizing pneumonia, invasive pulmonary aspergillosis, bronchiolitis obliterans organizing pneumonia

Introduction

Cryptogenic organizing pneumonia (COP) is an interstitial lung disease characterized by intra-alveolar buds of connective tissue. The characteristic clinical features of COP are usually non-specific and include constitutional symptoms with flu-like illness, followed by progressive cough, dyspnea, fever, elevation of biological inflammatory markers, patchy infiltrates on chest radiography and chest computed tomography (CT), and a restrictive spirometric pattern with diffusion impairment. As COP can be idiopathic or associated with a known underlying disease, delayed diagnosis or misdiagnosis is likely to occur.

In this case report, we present a 56-year-old man with co-occurrence of COP and IPA. IPA remains a significant cause of morbidity and mortality. The spectrum of disease related to *Aspergillus* spp. within the lung is variable. The exact nature of any association of *Aspergillus* spp. either in the development or progression of COP remains unexplored.

To the best of our knowledge, this is a scarce case report of COP and IPA co-occurrence.

Case presentation

The study was reviewed and approved by the Institutional Ethics Committee of Shanghai

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Table 1. Clinical features of the patient during the in-hospital treatment period

Variable	First-time admission		Second-time admission			Third-time admission		
Time	07-21	08-08	08-24	08-27	08-30	11-09	11-18	11-27
WBC (× 10 ⁹ /l)	4.19	4.26	5.33	5.91	12.7↑	6.38	4.17	1.73↓
Neut (%)	49.5↓	46.2↓	74.6↑	80.5↑	90.0↑	76.0↑	85.6↑	68.0
Hb (g/L)	136	123↓	124↓	119↓	114↓	89↓	100↓	102↓
PLT (× 10 ⁹ /l)	112	218	250	258	333↑	55↓	56↓	82↓
CRP (mg/l)	16.5 ↑	23.8↑	119.0↑	136↑	40.3↑		148.8↑	> 214↑
K (mmol/L)	3.56	4.19	4.56	3.90		3.09↓	5.22↑	4.98
Ca (mmol/L)	ND	2.16	2.16			2.02↓	2.38	2.23
BUN (mmol/L)	2.7	5.1	4.8			13.4↑	15.3↑	16.9
Creat (mg/L)	67.3	74.6	70.6			45.9↓	56.3↓	72.6
Glu (ummol/L)	4.5	ND	ND			7.9↑		
SGOT (U/L)	18.4	14.8	ND	55.6	62.5↑	82.5↑	67.1↑	25.9
SGPT (U/L)	35.4	23.1	107.4↑	97.1↑	101.8↑	25.8	16.9	56.5↑
γ-GT (U/L)	23.8	26.8	ND	215.4↑		92.9↑	114.4↑	150.8↑
Protein (g/L)	69	66	61↓		49↓	43↓	40	66
Albumin (g/L)	41	34	32↓	26↓	25↓	28↓		24↓

Abbreviations: WBC, white blood count; Hb, Hemoglobin B; PLT, Platelets; CRP, C Reactive Protein; K, kalium; Ca, calcium; BUN, Blood Urea Nitrogen; SGOT, serum glutamic-oxaloacetic transaminase; SGPT, Serum Glutamic Pyruvic Transaminase; γ-GT, γ-glutamyltransferase. ↑: Increase (compare with normal data); ↓: Decrease (compare with normal data).

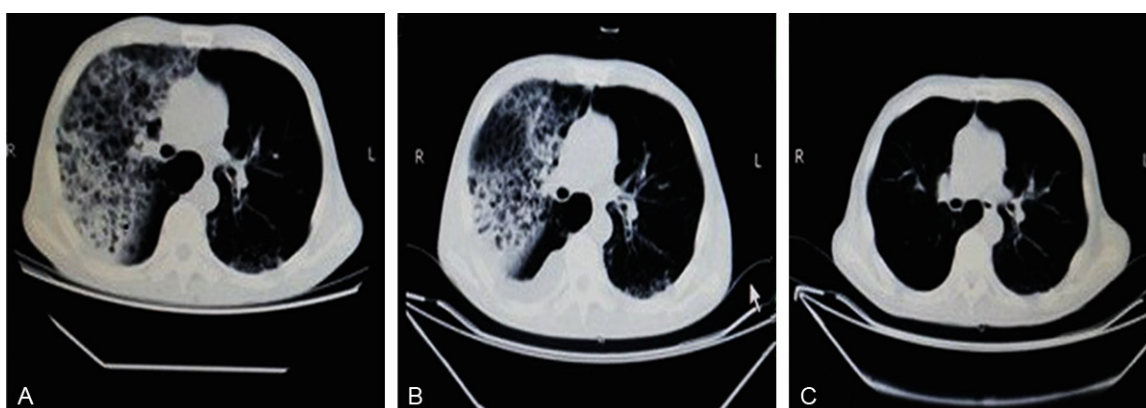


Figure 1. Chest computed tomographies (CT). A: Upon first admission, diffuse infiltrating lesions were evident in right lobe; B: one week after ceftriaxon was initiated, a slight decrease of the lesions can be observed; C: Chest computed tomographies (CT) showed hydropneumothorax after lung biopsy in second admission.

Tenth People's Hospital of Tongji University and was conducted in compliance with the Helsinki Declaration. Written informed consent was obtained from patient. A 56-year-old man came to our hospital for medical consultation because of productive cough for several weeks and unremitting high fever (39°C) in a recent week. Before admission, the patient had experienced a one-year history of expectoration with white bubble sputum, cough and shortness of breath. The patient reported no exposure to musty or dusty conditions that may have instigated or exacerbated the symptoms, nor did he have a history of alcohol abuse or smoking.

Physical examination on admission showed that the patient looked acutely ill and emaciated. Laboratory test results showed that the blood profiling, hepatic and renal functions were outside the normal ranges. The results of arterial blood gas and electrolyte tests are shown in **Table 1**. The results of HIV (human immunodeficiency virus), HBV (hepatitis B virus), sputum smear and cultures for bacilli and mycobacteria were negative.

Bacteriological analysis did not reveal any pathogenic agent. Bronchoalveolar lavage fluid (BAL) showed numerous hyphae of *Aspergillus*.

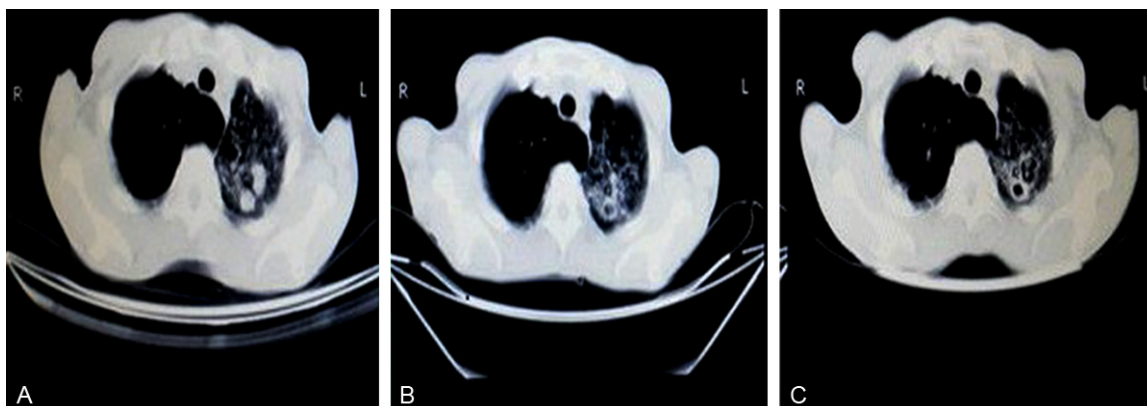


Figure 2. Chest computed tomographies (CT). A: Upon second admission, the diagnosis of invasive pulmonary aspergillosis (IPA): Multiple lesions were present in left lungs, including: cavity, bronchiolitis associated with thickened edbronchial walls; B: After 45 mg/day prednisone treatment in second admission; C: lesions were relapse in left lobe of third-time admission.

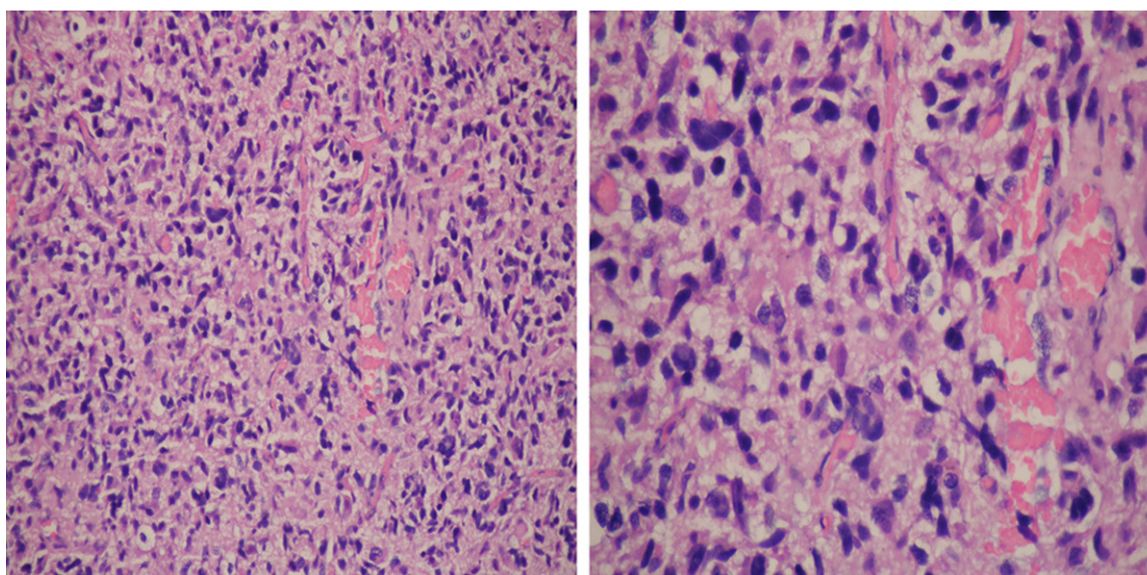


Figure 3. Histopathological. Pathological observation confirmed the diagnosis of cryptogenic organizing pneumonia (COP): numerous capillary channels, plump endothelial cells, and stromal cells with foamy clear cytoplasm. (left Hematoxylin and eosin (H&E) \times 200, right Hematoxylin and eosin (H&E) \times 400).

Aspergillus was detected in the sputum of the patient. Pulmonary function presented restrictive ventilatory functional disturbance.

First treatment

Based on the initial diagnosis of bilateral pneumonia as shown by CT and laboratory parameters (**Figure 1A** and **Table 1**), ceftriaxone was initiated. As no improvement was observed in the symptoms and pulmonary infiltrates as detected by CT seven days after the first admission and antibiotic therapy (**Figure 1B**), the diagnosis of IPA was made based upon the

patient's failure to respond to the empirical treatment, the further imaging findings, and the culture-positive *Aspergillus fumigatus* detected in the fiberoptic bronchoscopy anti-pollution brush sample. An antifungal regimen using intravenous voriconazole (0.2 q12 h after 0.3 q12 h) was immediately initiated. One week later, the patient's general appearance improved throughout the antifungal treatment, and the patient's temperature returned to a normal level. The patient was discharged and converted to oral voriconazole (200 mg once every 12 h).

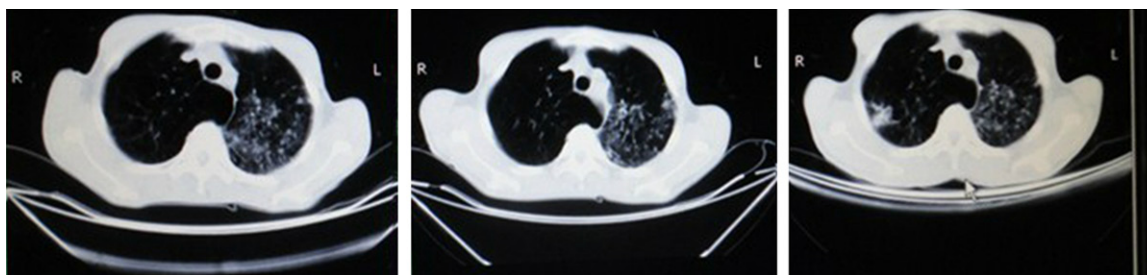


Figure 4. Chest computed tomographies (CT). Upon third admission. After Glucocorticoid therapy, CT reexamination demonstrated no obvious focal absorption.

Second treatment

Two weeks after discharge, the patient was re-admitted to the hospital with one day remittent high fever. Supposing that the patient had not got rid of the fungal infection completely, he was put on oral voriconazole and intravenous moxifloxacin again after the second admission. At day 7 after admission, the patient's condition deteriorated progressively, and CT scan showed bilateral patchy opacities (**Figure 2A**). To clarify the diagnosis, CT-guided percutaneous lung biopsy was performed. Histology revealed centrilobular emphysema, activated alveolar cells, and granulated polyps in the terminal bronchioli and alveolar ducts (**Figure 3**). Fibrin and foam cells were found in the alveoli. These findings were consistent with the diagnosis of COP. However, the patient developed hydropneumothorax, mediastinal emphysema and subcutaneous emphysema after lung biopsy, and therefore closed drainage of thoracic cavity and high-flow oxygen inhalation were administered for a week. CT scan revealed that the hydropneumothorax was absorbed and the chest tube was withdrawn (**Figure 1C**).

After the diagnosis of COP, 45 mg/day prednisone was administered but the symptoms were not relieved (**Figure 2B**). Methylprednisolone I.V (intravenous drip) therapy (80 mg daily) was initiated instead, with the dosage tapering from 10 mg to 40 mg daily, and then to oral methylprednisolone (40 mg daily). During the 10-day follow-up period, the patient remained well, with no other symptoms.

Third treatment

Three months after the second admission, CT reexamination demonstrated no obvious focal absorption (**Figure 2C, Figure 4**). Glucocorticoid

therapy-related complications including osteoporosis, lower-extremity skin infection, hypoalbuminemia and glucose metabolic disorder were observed in company with COP and IPA. Consequently, the patient's condition deteriorated, and the patient develop acute respiratory failure requiring mechanical ventilation. Despite our unremitting efforts, the patient died in the hospital.

Literature review

Cryptogenic organizing pneumonia used to be known as bronchiolitis obliterans organizing pneumonia (BOOP) in the past few decades. But as no specific cause can be detected in most cases, it is often considered idiopathic because organizing pneumonia is the major histological criterion without the presence of bronchiolitis obliterans in some cases. Despite its relative rarity, a common disorder that was especially gratifying for the clinician due to its prompt improvement under corticosteroid treatment.

Because of the limited published literature on this topic and limited information on the outcome of COP, we reviewed a total of 53 case reports involving 58 patients with COP or BOOP diagnosed from 1988 through 2013 published in PubMed, EMBASE, and Cochrane databases (**Table 2**). The 58 patients included 36 males and 22 females who ranged in age from 14 to 75 years with a mean of 50 years. Of them, 11 patients were reported to have HIV, 6 patients have ID (idiopathic), 6 have cancer, 4 have RA (rheumatoid arthritis), 2 have UC (ulcerative colitis), 2 have SS (Sjogren syndrome), and 2 have SLE (systemic lupuserythematosus). The remaining 25 patients were reported to have other different causes (**Table 2**). Of the 58 patients reported in the published literature,

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Table 2. Literature review of reported cases of COP

Studies	Year	Mean Age (yr)	No. of Patients M/F	Associated conditions	Pulmonary Function Results*	Mean Dose of Pred-nisone Daily	Duration of Therapy	Type of Biopsy	Outcome
Swinburn <i>et al.</i> [1]	1988	20	0/1	UC	NA	40 mg	NA	OLBX	R = 1
Allen <i>et al.</i> [2]	1989	40	1/0	HIV	NA	80 mg	5 mo	OLBX	C = 1
Camus <i>et al.</i> [3]	1989	70	2/0	Acebut or amio	NA	40 mg	17 mo	TBBX = 1 OLBX = 1	R = 1 C = 1
Patel <i>et al.</i> [4]	1989	56.6	0/2	ID = 2	NA 2) 2.44	NA	NA	OLBX = 1 TBBX = 1	R = 2
Liote <i>et al.</i> [5]	1990	39	1/0	HIV	NA	NA	NA	OLBX	C = 1
Garcia-Vicuna <i>et al.</i> [6]	1990	67	1/0	RA	NA	7.5 mg and 10 mg MTX	8 mo	OLBX	C=1
Matteson <i>et al.</i> [7]	1990	52	1/0	SS	NA	400 mg	3 mo	OLBX	R = 1
Carey <i>et al.</i> [8]	1991	56	1/0	Cnl	NA	NA	> 3 mo	OLBX	R = 1
Anonymous <i>et al.</i> [9]	1991	68	1/0	ID = 1	1) 1.31 2) 1.46 4) 59	60 mg	7 mon	TBBX	R = 1
Laguna <i>et al.</i> [10]	1991	28	1/0	VIDS	NA	1 mg/kg	11 mo	OLBX	C = 1
Thiel <i>et al.</i> [11]	1991	75	1/0	RA	1) 1.64 2) 2.53	80 mg	18 mo	OLBX	R = 1
Peramaki <i>et al.</i> [12]	1991	60	1/0	Parainf 3 virus	1) 1.02 2) 2.85	60 mg	NA	OLBX	C = 1
Kaufman <i>et al.</i> [13]	1991	26	0/1	VIDS	1) 2.94 2) 3.66	60 mg	"Few mo"	OLBX	R=1
Gammon <i>et al.</i> [14]	1992	41	1/1	SLE	1) 1.68 2) 2.11 3) 64	60 mg	3 mo	OLBX	R = 1 D = 1
Thirman <i>et al.</i> [15]	1992	37	1/0	BMT	1) 3.9 2) 4.11	120 mg	> 1 yr	TBBX	C = 1
Usui <i>et al.</i> [16]	1992	69	0/1	SS	1) 1.2 2) 1.52	1,000 mg	2 d	Autopsy	D = 1
Robinson <i>et al.</i> [17]	1992	71	1/0	PAN=1	NA	NA	1 wk	OLBX	D = 1
Romero <i>et al.</i> [18]	1992	58	0/1	ML	1) 0.9 2) 1.15	60 mg	10 mo	TBBX	C = 1
Rutherford <i>et al.</i> [19]	1992	48	1/0	MGN	NA	500 mg IV	8 mo	OLBX	R = 1
Domingo <i>et al.</i> [20]	1993	54	1/0	ID=1	3) 100 4) 107	1 mg/Kg	12 mo	OLBX	R = 1
Hsue <i>et al.</i> [21]	1993	36	0/1	PM	2) 2.32	60 mg	> 1 yr	OLBX	C = 1
Ippolito <i>et al.</i> [22]	1993	68	0/1	RA	NA	60 mg	> 5 mo	OLBX	R = 1
Reich <i>et al.</i> [23]	1993	68	1/0	ID = 1	NA	No treatment		TBBX	R = 1
Schwarz <i>et al.</i> [24]	1993	45	0/1	ID = 1	NA	2 gm IV	> 5 mo	OLBX	R = 1
Yale <i>et al.</i> [25]	1993	64	0/1	PVM	NA	60 mg	9 mo	OLBX	R = 1
Zackrisson <i>et al.</i> [26]	1993	63	1/0	EMC	NA	80 mg	"Several months"	OLBX	C = 1

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Leo <i>et al.</i> [27]	1994	35	1/0	HIV	NA	20-30 mg	9 mo	TBBX	C = 1
Garcia <i>et al.</i> [28]	1994	32	1/0	HIV	NA	NA	14 mo	autopsy	D = 1
Watson <i>et al.</i> [29]	1995	30	0/1	Nodular sclerosing hodgkin's disease	NA	NA	4 mo	TBBX	R = 1
Joseph <i>et al.</i> [30]	1995	30	1/0	HIV	NA	NA	NA	TBBX	C = 1
Sanito <i>et al.</i> [31]	1995	47	1/0	NA	NA	60	15 mo	TBBX	C = 1
Pohl <i>et al.</i> [32]	1996	26	0/1	NA	Idiopathic CD4+depletion	NA	14	OLBX	C = 1
Zahraa <i>et al.</i> [33]	1996	14	1/0	HIV	NA	40	15 mo	OLBX	D = 1
Diaz <i>et al.</i> [34]	1997	26	1/0	HIV	NA	60	10 mo	OLBX	D = 1
Ghidini <i>et al.</i> [35]	1999	27	0/1	HIV	NA	40 mg	6 mo	OLBX	C = 1
Alleman <i>et al.</i> [36]	2002	43	1/0	NA	restriction.	high-dose	6 mo	OLBX	C = 1
Koinuma <i>et al.</i> [37]	2002	60	0/1	NA	NA	12.5 mg	8 mo	TBBX	R = 1
Song <i>et al.</i> [38]	2003	61	1/0	BAC	NA	1 mg/kg	7 mo	TBBC	C = 1
Khater <i>et al.</i> [39]	2004	64	1/0	AIDS+CHF	NA	50 mg	> 4 mo	TBBX	D = 1
Kaushik <i>et al.</i> [40]	2004	70	1/0	RA	NA	250 mg	4 week	TBBX	C = 1
Guerrero <i>et al.</i> [41]	2005	71	0/1	Breast cancer	NA	60 mg	NA	clinically	R = 1
Verma <i>et al.</i> [42]	2006	56	1/0	Pneumocystis carinii	NA	NA	NA	OLBX	C = 1
Carreno <i>et al.</i> [43]	2007	56	0/1	PCKD	NA	60 mg	> 2 mo	fiberbronchos- copy	C = 1
Fenton <i>et al.</i> [44]	2008	71	0/1	Nitrofurantoin	1) 1.33 2) 1.53 3) 57 4) 47	40 mg	11 mo	TBBX	C = 1
Bissoli <i>et al.</i> [45]	2008	71	0/1	Breast cancer	NA	NA	1 week	biopsies bronchoscopy	C = 1
Miladinovic-Djukanovic <i>et al.</i> [46]	2009	57	1/0	NA	3) 69 4) 61.8	60 mg	15 mo	OLBX	C = 1
Wantke <i>et al.</i> [47]	2008	46	0/1	SRP positive necrotising myositis	1) 1.96 2) 2.81 3) 61 4) 72	0.75 mg/kg	33 mo	OLBX	R = 1
Park <i>et al.</i> [48]	2009	45	0/1	ADM/Breast cancer	NA	20 mg	> 2 mo	TBBX	D = 1
Ponnuswamy <i>et al.</i> [49]	2009	50	1/0	NA	1) 2.14 2) 2.65 3) 100 4) 93	NA	> 2 mo	OLBX	C = 1
Hua <i>et al.</i> [50]	2010	33	1/0	KFD	NA	45 mg	3 mo	TBBX	R = 1
Sato <i>et al.</i> [51]	2011	32	0/1	AOSD	NA	30 mg	> 1 mo	TBLB	R = 1
Aydogdu <i>et al.</i> [52]	2012	57	1/0	UC/Air leak syndrome	NA	1 mg/kg (60 mg)	> 1 mo	TBBX	C = 1
Hiraki <i>et al.</i> [53]	2012	72	3/0	Lung cancer	NA	NA	NA	NA	D = 3

Abbreviations: NA, not available; R, recovery; C, chronic; D, death; OLBX, open lung biopsy; TBBX, trans-bronchial biopsy; UC, ulcerative colitis; ID, idiopathic; RA, rheumatoid arthritis; MTX, methotrexate; SS, Sjogren syndrome; Cni, Cryptococcus Normanna infection; VIDS, variable immunodeficiency syndrome; SLE, systemic lupus erythematosus; PAN, polyarteritis nodosa; M, malignant lymphoma; MGN, mesangiocapillary glomerulonephritis; PM-DM, Polymyositis-dermatomyositis; PVM, Plasmodium vivax malaria; EMC, essential mixed cryoglobulinemia; ADM, Amyopathic dermatomyositis; AOSD, adult onset Still's disease; BAC, Bronchioloalveolar Carcinoma; KFD, Kikuchi-Fujimoto disease; NM, necrotising myositis; PCKD, polycystic kidney disease; SRP, Signal recognition particle; *: 1) FEV1; 2) FVC; 3) FEV1%P; 4) FVC%P.

30 patients were diagnosed by OLBX (open lung biopsy), 19 by TBBX (trans-bronchial biopsy), 2 by autopsy, and 2 by other types of biopsy. TBBX failed to make a correct diagnosis in 6 patients, in whom OLBX was required. Pulmonary function tests showed a restrictive pattern in most patients and a combined restrictive and obstructive pattern in one case. Generally, patients recovered completely at a dose of 20-1,000 mg/d prednisone. The usual duration was 3-4 months. A standardized therapeutic protocol allowed a reduction in prednisone doses without adversely affecting the outcome and relapse rate. Of the 58 patients, 22 (37.9%) patients resolved completely, 25 (43.1%) patients improved but had residual abnormalities, and 11 (19%) patients died.

Discussion

This article reports a 56-year-old male patient who was diagnosed with IPA and COP, and reviews additional 58 COP patients reported in the literature during the period from 1988 through 2013. COP and IPA were suspected mostly because of TBBX, histopathology, and radiological findings. The simultaneous presence of these two diseases is scarce and has never been reviewed so many literatures before.

Interestingly, both COP and IPA are predominantly air space and present similar radiological features. Co-existence of COP and IPA makes both diagnosis and treatment difficult and challenging. Firstly, some authors have demonstrated that long-term systemic corticosteroid therapy with underlying chronic lung conditions is a risk factor for IPA. Secondly, it is also worth considering whether anti-fungal agents are a risk factor for COP. IPA is a life-threatening fungal infection that predominantly affects severely immunocompromised patients [54, 55], particularly those with prolonged neutropenia or organ transplantation. Other predisposing factors, such as prolonged systemic corticosteroid therapy and HIV infection, have also been recognized. Thirdly, the case of COP in our patient responded to corticosteroids but relapse occurred when the corticosteroid dosage was tapered off. This patient died of the adverse reactions of corticosteroids. Therefore, in such patients, and specially diagnosis of COP and IPA should be considered significant by fur-

ther investigations to rapidly confirm the diagnosis.

To avoid delayed diagnosis and therapeutic pitfalls, clinicians should maintain a high index of suspicion for IPA and COP: 1) COP is not responsive to antibiotic therapy and is associated with pathogens on bronchioloalveolar lavage or lung biopsy. 2) Amphotericin-B is the drug of choice for the treatment of IPA. The combination of amphotericin-B and flucytosine not only offers a synergistic effect but helps reduce the dosage and the toxic effect of amphotericin-B. 3) The disease is usually responsive to corticosteroid treatment. However, relapse can occur when steroids are tapered or discontinued. Long-term use of corticosteroids is often associated with complications in diverse organs and systems, and therefore the importance of limiting corticosteroid prescriptions at the lowest possible dose should be addressed [56, 57]. We feel that the strategy should aim at minimizing the adverse effects of corticosteroids and avoiding over-treatment to obtain a well-equilibrated balance between using an efficient treatment protocol and minimization of the adverse effects of corticosteroids by using low doses and short treatment durations.

Conclusion

This is a scarce report of COP and IPA. In the presence of pulmonary disease, the detection of fungi and COP should prompt additional diagnostic efforts. In addition, preventive methods should be established as soon as possible. This case report suggests that waiting for positive results of routine microbiological analyses runs the risk of a fatal delay in diagnosis. Heightened surveillance with endotracheal cultures, HRCT scan and lung biopsy must be considered early in the management of such patients for the sake of avoiding a delay in appropriate treatment. Voriconazole or amphotericin-B or both should currently be considered the drug of choice in the management of COP and IPA.

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Disclosure of conflict of interest

None.

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