



Fig. 1. Chest computed tomography, showing cystic lymphangioma in the anterior mediastinum before surgery.

post-operative period was complicated by respiratory failure with rales and accumulation of secretions that required reintubation and transfer to the intensive care unit. The follow-up X-ray also revealed elevation of the left hemidiaphragm, indicative of post-surgical phrenic nerve palsy. After extubation breathing support continued with non-invasive mechanical ventilation.

In the following days the patient presented several episodes of partial and total atelectasis of the left lung, requiring repeated fiberoptic bronchoscopic procedures and placement of an endobronchial stent. Finally, due to prolonged weaning, a surgical tracheostomy was performed and the endobronchial stent was removed. The patient was stabilized and ventilatory support and oxygen requirements could be gradually reduced. The patient made good progress during her hospital stay, and some days later daytime respiratory cannulas could be withdrawn, although nocturnal non-invasive support continued.

Intrathoracic cystic lymphangiomas are rare benign tumors that generally occur in children and young adults.^{2,4} Imaging tests are required for diagnosis (CT or magnetic resonance) and histological confirmation can be obtained with CT-guided biopsy or mediastinoscopy.²⁻⁴ The most effective treatment is resection, although incomplete resection can be associated with a risk of recurrence.^{2,3} Other therapeutic options include aspiration and drainage of the cysts for emergency decompression, injection of sclerosing agents, such as bleomycin or OK-432, or low-dose radiation therapy.²

Our case is of particular interest due to both the low incidence of this entity in elderly people and the intrathoracic site. Although surgical treatment is the most widely accepted option, due to its good prognosis and lower risk of recurrence, the procedure can involve considerable morbidity. Such was the case in our patient, who presented multiple complications after surgery.

References

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Sandra Cuerdo,^a Marina Paradelo,^b Jacobo Sellarés^{a,*}

^a Servicio de Neumología y Alergia Respiratoria, Institut del Tòrax, Hospital Clínic, Barcelona, Spain

^b Servicio de Cirugía Torácica, Institut del Tòrax, Hospital Clínic, Barcelona, Spain

* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: sellares@clinic.ub.es (J. Sellarés).

The Exception Proves the Rule[☆]



La excepción prueba la regla

To the Editor,

I share the authors¹ interest in clarifying the popular saying “the exception confirms the rule”; however, the proof of its falsity is not the proof put forward, nor does the warning originate in the eccentric winner of the Nobel prize in Physics, Richard Feynman. The problem is much older, bears no relationship whatsoever to physics, but stems from a poor knowledge of Latin in our field. Marcus Tullius Cicero (106-43 B.C.), in one of his marvelous speeches delivered during the defense of Lucius Cornellius Balbus, stated: “*exceptio probat regulam in casibus non exceptis*”, the literal translation of which would be “the exception proves the rule in cases not excepted”. The Latin verb “*probare*” means to prove, and from thence comes “to confirm”. But *probare* not only means “to prove” or “to confirm”; it also means “to verify”, “to test”. That is, the real

translation of the phrase would be “the exception tests the rule”. Or, in other words, the exception is the verification that there is a rule. Never, therefore, that the rule is false.

I will leave the issue of whether medicine is a descriptive or probabilistic science, or both, to others who venture to criticize the editorial and put the physicists in their place. In the case of the exception and the rule, we humbly render unto to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to Cicero what is his.

Reference

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Pere Casan Clarà

Instituto Nacional de Silicosis, Hospital Universitario Central de Asturias, Facultad de Medicina, Oviedo, Asturias, Spain

E-mail address: pcasan@ins.es

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