



Choledocholithiasis in children: evaluating the efficacy of expectant strategies

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Introduction

Choledocholithiasis, the presence of gallstones in the common bile duct (CBD), is a rare yet serious condition in pediatric patients. The optimal management strategy is still a subject of debate.

Aim



to examine the natural history of choledocholithiasis in children in an attempt to provide guidelines for its management.

Methods:

- Retrospective study - children diagnosed with choledocholithiasis
- between 2003 – 2023
- Patients were categorized into those managed conservatively and those undergoing ERCP.

Results:

- 12 children
- Mean age 8.9 ± 1.6 years
- Clinical presentations: abdominal pain (91.7%),
obstructive jaundice (75%)
fever (58.3%)
- **choledocholithiasis: 7 cases** (58.3%) as a distinct entity, with 5 of these (71.4%)
5cases : acute pancreatitis,
- **retained CBD stones** in 46.7% of cases (in patients previously cholecystectomized)
- Management

Conservative treatment	11 patients (91.7%), close monitoring / supportive care
ERCP	one patient.
- Among those managed conservatively, 10 children (91%) achieved spontaneous resolution of symptoms and demonstrated sonographic resolution within 1 week without the need for invasive procedures.
- No recurrences of choledocholithiasis in either group during the follow-up period of 24 months.

Conclusion

Our findings suggest that the natural history of choledocholithiasis in children may support expectant management strategies as there is a high likelihood of spontaneous passage of stones through the papilla and subsequent resolution of symptoms without the need for invasive procedures.