Air in the liver?

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Case

A 52-year-old male chronic haemodialysis (HD) patient was admitted with a 12h history of severe, diffuse abdominal pain. Pain had commenced during the final hour of the patient’s previous HD session. The patient had been on dialysis for 22 years. Calciphylaxis of skin over the calf had been successfully treated with daily HD over a 3 month period.

On examination the patient was in distress, hypotensive and exhibited abdominal swelling and guarding. Serum LDH levels were markedly elevated. A CT of the abdomen showed three signs of advanced mesenteric ischaemia with possible bowel necrosis: pneumatosis intestinalis (Figure 1), air in the mesenteric vessels (Figure 1) and air in the portal venous system (Figure 2) (1,2).

Despite three laparotomies and the removal of necrotic distal small bowel, the patient died. Light microscopy examination revealed extensive medial calcification of medium and small size mesenteric arteries. The final diagnosis was non-occlusive mesenteric ischaemia and subsequent bowel necrosis.

Conflict of interest statement. None declared.

References