Letters. Notices

Bile duct injury after laparoscopic cholecystectomy

EDITOR,—I read with interest the report of Davids et al (Gut 1993; 34: 1250–4) describing their experience of ERCP in the management of patients with bile duct injuries after laparoscopic cholecystectomy. We too have found an increasing incidence of such injuries after laparoscopic cholecystectomy, compared with open cholecystectomy, as the first procedure becomes more widely performed. I agree that early ERCP is the investigation of choice and like Davids et al have found that bile duct dilatation has not always been detected by abdominal ultrasound.

In my opinion the authors failed to mention the most probable cause for strictures in the mid common bile duct. I believe these are caused by thermal damage produced by the diathermy hook during dissection. There is a risk of such injury when an L shaped hook is used. While dissecting with the tip of the hook, the heel can cause unnoticed damage possibly due to conduction of electricity along a previously placed metal clip. The delayed necrosis of the bile duct and the resultant inflammatory reaction would, I think, explain the initial 'silent' anicteric period to which the authors refer. It would also explain the very localised area of dense fibrosis, which I have personally found surrounding the bile duct stricture.

I have treated two such patients, who have been referred to me, by hepaticojejunostomy. Although I accept that endoscopic stenting will be possible in many of these patients, I disagree that it should be used preferentially in young patients simply because 'a proximal hepaticojejunostomy seems unattractive' and endoscopic stenting seems 'less invasive'. Longterm efficacy should be the yardstick by which any treatment is judged rather than the degree of therapeutic 'invasion' necessary. The authors at present are in no position to recommend endoscopic stenting after such a short follow up. Successfully performed hepaticojejunostomy has been shown to be effective in the long term and not associated with significant morbidity. I would suggest that the effects of chronic culminative low grade sepsis, which are associated with the longterm use of indwelling endoprostheses mitigate against its use in the young. An admittedly difficult operation when performed by someone experienced in the field, offers the best chance of a longterm cure particularly if performed early and before infection has been introduced into the area.

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NOTES

Gut 1993; 34: 1297–9. The editor would like to make clear that the recommendations in this paper apply to adults and are not relevant to children.

Budd-Chiari Syndrome

The Third International Symposium on Budd-Chiari Syndrome will be held in London on 11–13 April 1994. Further information from Professor K E F Hobbs, University Department of Surgery, Royal Free Hospital, Pond Street, London NW3 2QG. Tel: 44 71 435 6121; fax: 44 71 431 4528.

Gastrointestinal motility

The 7th European Symposium on Gastrointestinal Motility, will be held in Toulouse, France on 7–9 July 1994. Further information from: Lionel Bueno, Europa Organisation, 40 Boulevard des Récollets, BP 4406, F-31055 Toulouse, France. Tel: 33 61 32 66 99; fax: 33 61 32 66 00.

Digestive endoscopy course

The European Postgraduate Gastro-Surgical School is organizing this course at the Academic Medical Center of the University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, The Netherlands on 8–9 September 1994. For information contact: Helma Stockmann, Managing Director European Postgraduate Gastro-Surgical School, Room G4–109, 3, Academic Medical Center, Meibergdreef 9, 1105 AZ Amsterdam, The Netherlands. Tel: 31 20 5663926; fax: 31 20 6914858.

European Pancreatic Association

The 26th meeting of the European Pancreatic Association will be held in Bologna, Italy on 8–10 September 1994. Further information from: Professor Lucio Gullo, Institute of Medicine and Gastroenterology, St Orsola Hospital, 40138 Bologna, Italy. Fax: 39 51 392538; tel: 39 51 6364129.

Bile acids in gastroenterology


Endoscopic Surgery

The 2nd Asian Pacific Congress of Endoscopic Surgery will be held in Hong Kong from 19–23 June 1995. Further information to Dr Sydney Chung, Department of Surgery, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Prince of Wales Hospital, Shatin, Hong Kong. Tel: 852 636 2627; fax: 852 645 3602.