between the cavity and the bronchus. Peripheral dense nodules, especially nonmalignant ones, are not frequently in direct communication with airways, and the success of TBB depends on the possibility of reaching a bronchus that will lead forward or into the lesion.

We conclude that TBB during fiberoptic bronchoscopy appears to be an effective method for investigation of CPPL.

Angelo Cazzadori, M.D.,
Fabio Malessani, M.D., and
Maurizio Merlo, M.D.,
Bronchoscopy Service,
General Hospital of Verona,
Verona, Italy

Reprint requests: Dr. Cazzadori, Servizio Broncoscopia, Ospedale Civile Maggiore, 37126 Verona, Italy

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Utility of Admission Chest Radiography in Management of Acute Asthma in Adults

To the Editor:

In the July 1991 issue of Chest, White et al 1 describe the utility of admission chest radiography in the management of adults admitted to the hospital with acute asthma. They conclude their article with a recommendation for routine chest radiography in this patient group.

As a radiologist, I am concerned with several aspects of this report. Two radiographic findings that were significantly associated with subsequent antibiotic use were described as "focal opacity" and "increased interstitial markings." In a subset of patients, the presence of these opacities appeared to prompt antibiotic prescription, even in the absence of clinical indicators of infection. I do not know what pathologic findings these descriptors are intended to indicate. With respect to pathophysiologic abnormalities characteristic of asthma, focal opacities may represent areas of focal atelectasis and/or bronchial mucus plugs. I believe that neither of these entities, as isolated radiographic findings, necessitates antibiotic therapy. Bacterial pneumonia appears on a radiograph as air space consolidation, typically segmental or lobar in distribution. Apparently, this finding was not described in any patient in the authors' series. Parenchymal infiltrative disease that may result in abnormal "interstitial" opacities is not a feature of asthma.

I accept the fact that some patients with these opacities were subsequently treated with antibiotics. However, we do not know which patients actually had bacterial pneumonia, if any. Some may have had acute bacterial bronchitis, but this disorder does not produce parenchymal opacities. As physicians, we should attempt to determine which diagnostic and management strategies actually improve clinical outcome before recommending "routine" diagnostic tests. Although this was obviously not the specific intent of the authors' investigation, we should view their recommendation with appropriate skepticism.

Howard Mann, M.D.,
Department of Radiology,
LDS Hospital,
Salt Lake City

REFERENCE


Pneumothorax Due to Pleural Perforation of a Pseudocavity Containing Aspergillomas in a Patient with Allergic Bronchopulmonary Aspergillosis

To the Editor:

A 22-year-old man was hospitalized for treatment of a cavitary lesion complicated by pneumothorax. He had a history of childhood asthma, which remitted during adolescence. One year previously he developed a cough, which produced purplish phlegm sometimes accompanied by plugs of dark material. A chest radiograph revealed tram lines and tubular shadows in the left upper lobe. Fiberoptic bronchoscopy and serologic tests confirmed a diagnosis of allergic bronchopulmonary aspergillosis (ABPA), for which the patient received corticosteroid therapy.

A cavitary lesion that evolved in the left upper lobe exhibited two unusual features: the lesion lacked continuity in its inferomedial aspect, and excrescences protruded from its inner wall. A computed tomographic (CT) scan, performed during a hospitalization for symptomatic pneumothorax, revealed central bronchiectasis and a cavity that contained three discrete masses (Fig 1).

The patient underwent an uncomplicated lobectomy while receiving perioperative amphotericin B therapy to a total dose of 145 mg. The pathologic findings were those of ABPA; the "cavity," which had perforated the pleural surface, was an aneurysmal expansion of an ectatic central bronchus that contained several aspergillomas. Aspergilloma complicating ABPA has been reported. 1 The putative mechanism is focal dilatation of the ectatic bronchi, consequent to the accretion of materials produced by the immune response to

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To the Editor:

In Dr. Mann's letter, he takes issue with our use of the terms "focal opacity" and "increased interstitial markings." The descriptor "focal opacity" was intended to be inclusive of both lobar and segmental air-space disease. We cannot exclude the possibility that a component of atelectasis may have been present. None of the opacities was typical of mucous plugging, which has a characteristic branching pattern. The descriptor "increased interstitial markings" was intended to be inclusive of a reticular infiltrate, a pattern that is well described in Mycoplasma pneumonia. 1 Many of these patients were treated with erythromycin.

Ideally, it would be useful to know which patients actually had bacterial pneumonia. However, in the emergency ward setting, this information is rarely available. The intent of our study was to demonstrate the effect of the radiographic findings available at the time on the immediate management of the patient.

Charles S. White, M.D.,
Diagnostic Imaging Department,
University of Maryland Medical Center,
Baltimore

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Roxithromycin Does Not Raise Serum Theophylline Levels

To the Editor:

It is well known that erythromycin, one of the conventional macrolides, increases serum levels of theophylline through inhibition of theophylline metabolism in liver.1,2 Recently, a number of macrolides have been developed and have become available for clinical use (eg, azithromycin, clarithromycin, and roxithromycin).

We previously reported3 that clarithromycin causes slight elevation of serum theophylline levels when it is coadministered with an oral slow-release preparation of theophylline in healthy volunteers. We now report the effect of roxithromycin on serum concentrations of theophylline.

Five healthy male volunteers received a slow-release preparation of theophylline orally (200 mg twice a day for four days), followed by oral azithromycin for five days (300 mg twice a day). We measured serum theophylline levels on the third and fifth days of coadministration. The maximum concentration and area under the concentration curve for theophylline were compared with control values. Roxithromycin did not raise serum theophylline levels (Fig 1, Table 1).

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FIGURE 1. Chest CT scans. Arrow = chest tube. Top, Window 5 image reveals presence of three excrescences within the cavity, a pneumothorax, and a thickened visceral pleural surface. Bottom, Lower window 6 image reveals markedly dilated central bronchi on the left, typical of ABPA, in close proximity to the “cavity.” Contiguous sections demonstrated that these bronchi merged with the cavity.

FIGURE 1. Effect of roxithromycin on serum theophylline (TP) levels.