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EDITOR'S QUIZ: GI SNAPSHOT

Copious amounts of ascites

Robin Spiller, Editor

Clinical presentation

An 81 year old woman consulted a local clinic with a three month history of progressive abdominal distension and subsequent diarrhoea, and appetite loss for one month. She was referred to our hospital for further evaluation.

On physical examination there were no signs of peritonitis or pancreatitis. Laboratory examination revealed slight anaemia (haemoglobin 10.8 g/dl) and elevation of a tumour marker (carcinoembryonic antigen 21 ng/ml). Sonography showed non-mobile ascitic fluid with internal irregular echogenic structures throughout the whole abdominal cavity (fig 1). Ascites with attenuation slightly higher than water was demonstrated on computerised tomography but the heterogeneity seen on sonography was not obvious (fig 2).

Question

What is the diagnosis?

See page 714 for answer

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Figure 1 Sonography showing non-mobile ascitic fluid with internal irregular echogenic structures throughout the whole abdominal cavity.

Figure 2 Computerised tomography showing ascites with attenuation slightly higher than water, but the heterogeneity seen on sonography was not obvious.