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EDITOR'S QUIZ: GI SNAPSHOT

An unsuspected cause of chronic colitis

Clinical presentation

A 38 year old man presented to our clinic with a four year history of histologically confirmed Crohn's colitis refractory to treatment and oligoarticular pain and swelling, especially of the knees, interpreted as Crohn's arthritis. Colitis had worsened and diarrhoea became frankly bloody after two years, despite various treatment combinations of topical and systemic mesalazine, prednisolone, sulfasalazine, and azathioprine.

In the patient's notes there was no history of travel abroad. The patient recalled that when symptoms started he had been working on cleaning water pipes of buildings.

At the time of presentation, inflammatory laboratory markers were moderately increased and white blood cell count revealed neutrophilic leucocytosis. Colonoscopy showed a pancolitis with ulcerations (size 2–3 cm) gradually increasing in number from the caecum towards the rectum (fig 1). The ileum was not involved. Histology confirmed superficial colonic ulcerations with inflammatory hyperplasia of the colonic mucosa and hyperplastic colon polyps. Granulomata, fistula, or dysplastic cells were not found.

Question

What is the diagnosis?

See page 841 for answer

This case is submitted by:

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Robin Spiller, Editor

Figure 1 Endoscopic aspect of colitis.

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