

Endoscopic therapy is an effective treatment for chronic pancreatitis

July 16 2012, By Amy Dugas Rose

(Medical Xpress) -- Endoscopic therapy was found to be effective for patients with chronic pancreatitis, according to researchers at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine, whose findings appear in the July issue of the [Journal of Clinical Gastroenterology and Hepatology](#)

[Chronic pancreatitis](#) is a progressive inflammatory disease characterized by [abdominal pain](#) and [permanent damage](#) to the [pancreas](#). Pain associated with the condition is often a result of pancreatic duct obstruction from stones or strictures. Endoscopic therapy is a minimally [invasive procedure](#) to treat these obstructions, alleviating the pressure in the pancreatic duct and ensuring adequate drainage of pancreatic secretions.

The researchers analyzed data on 146 patients enrolled in the North American Pancreatitis Study-2 to assess the utilization, effectiveness and long-term [clinical outcomes](#) of endoscopic therapy and surgery in patients with chronic pancreatitis compared with those who were managed medically.

Abdominal pain, the most debilitating symptom for those with the disease, was present in two-thirds of patients, with over half of those describing the pain as constant and requiring daily narcotics. Among study participants, 58 percent underwent endoscopic therapy, 33 percent were managed medically and 9 percent had surgery prior to the study. Of those who had endoscopic therapy, 33 percent later had surgery.

“Among those who were treated with endoscopic therapy, more than half had complete or partial long-term clinical success. Compared with those managed medically, patients undergoing endoscopic therapy were more symptomatic before treatment and had more complex disease. Of those patients who failed to improve after endoscopic therapy, half experienced good clinical outcomes following subsequent surgery,” said Dhiraj Yadav, M.D., M.P.H., lead author and associate professor of medicine in the Division of Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine.

In addition, researchers found that the patients who responded to endoscopic therapy had the treatment sooner after diagnosis than those who didn’t respond to the therapy. This finding suggests that a degree of irreversibility develops as the disease progresses and may indicate a role for endoscopic or surgical intervention early in the disease course.

“Based on these findings, we propose a stepwise approach for managing chronic pancreatitis, starting with medical management. When indicated, patients should be considered for [endoscopic therapy](#) early in the disease course,” said Dr. Yadav. “A multidisciplinary, proactive approach is critical to controlling symptoms and disease progression in an effective, safe and lasting manner.”

Provided by UPMC

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