

Case of Hepatitis C Presenting Like Endocarditis In A Young Patient With Substance Use Disorder

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INTRODUCTION

Substance abuse is a growing problem in the USA and worldwide. Commonly abused substances include alcohol, cannabis, opioids, and nicotine. Opioid use is particularly prevalent. Per the WHO, in 2021 approximately 60 million people used opioids resulting in 80,000 deaths.

PRESENTATION

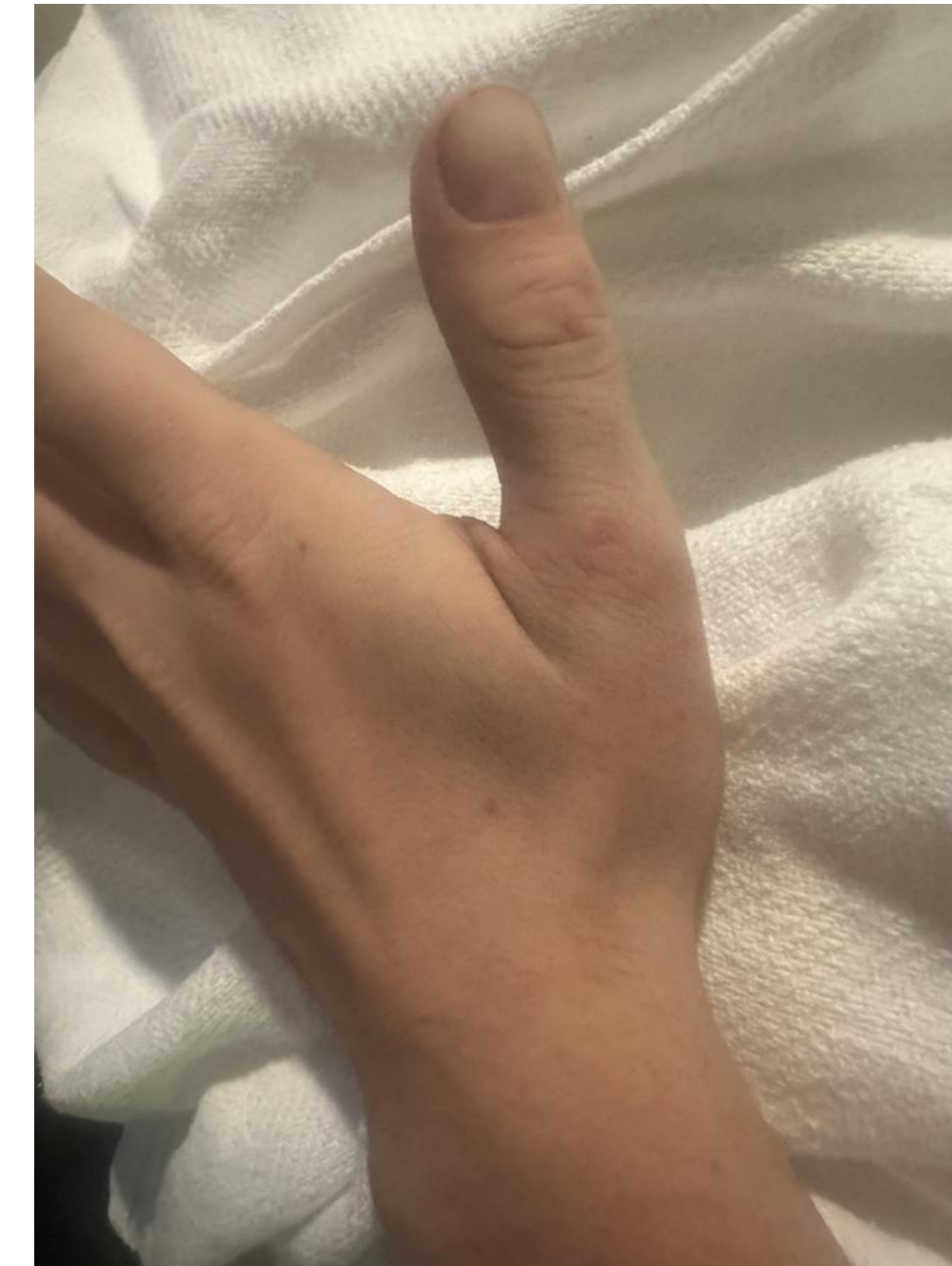
Patient is a 21-year-old male presented to the ED reporting daily heroin use over the past 3 weeks, though has a history of using it for the past 2 years and stopped in between. He had generalized body pain and right upper and lower quadrant abdominal pain. He had been unable to tolerate any oral intake and had been vomiting after every meal for the last 3 weeks.

Physical exam was significant only for large, ovoid, erythematous nodules on left dorsal foot, blanching and slightly painful to touch; diffuse scabs and sores on extremities; and nodules on dorsal IP joints on left hand. Significant labs included initial WBC 14.6. Sodium was 118, potassium was 2.2. Urine drug screen noted to be positive for cannabinoids, methamphetamines, and opioids. Initial EKG did not show typical T wave flattening changes for hypokalemia. Patient was started on buprenorphine and placed on COWS monitoring.

Initial blood culture came vial back positive for gram negative rods but repeat was negative and ruled an error. TTE ruled out infective endocarditis, with no valvular vegetation.

He was found to be HCV antibody positive and on discharge referred for outpatient gastroenterology for follow up. Repeat blood culture was negative.

IMAGES



DISCUSSION

This case illustrates the importance of keeping a wide differential in mind. Patient had physical exam findings consistent with endocarditis but echo was negative. Patient had Hepatitis C despite being asymptomatic throughout presentation—keeping patient's history of heroin use was critical while ordering testing. Timely diagnosis and treatment are critical to prevent poor outcomes including death.

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