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Chicken or the egg: an unusual presentation of Crohn's disease

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## The chicken or the egg: An unusual presentation of Crohn's disease

### Clinical record

A 73-year-old female without a significant past medical history, developed *Streptococcus pyogenes* necrotizing fasciitis (NF) of her left breast that necessitated mastectomy, skin grafting and a prolonged ICU admission. A lengthy rehabilitation admission followed, and she was discharged home four months after initial presentation.

Over the ensuing six months she became increasingly malnourished and described symptoms of significant fatigue, low mood and mild diarrhoea. Investigations revealed hypoalbuminemia with a nadir of 10g/L (35-50g/L), hypocalcaemia, hypophosphataemia and hypomagnesaemia. An extraintestinal cause for hypoalbuminemia was excluded. Faecal calprotectin was elevated at >1500ug/g (<50ug/g) as was faecal alpha 1 antitrypsin level at >1.8mg/g (<1.0mg/g).

A complete colonoscopy with intubation of the terminal ileum and a gastroscopy were macroscopically and histologically normal. A computed tomography scan of the abdomen and pelvis was unremarkable. Capsule endoscopy demonstrated multiple small ulcers in the proximal small bowel and concern was raised when the capsule had not transited into the colon by the end of the study. A plain abdominal x-ray revealed a retained capsule and she subsequently underwent antegrade double balloon enteroscopy (DBE).

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The DBE demonstrated atypical nodular ulcers in the proximal jejunum which were biopsied and thought to represent prior mucosal biopsies. Approximately 1.5-2m past the pylorus, the retained capsule was noted, proximal to a circumferential pinhole ulcerated stricture.

The patient underwent a 45cm resection of mid small bowel containing two separate strictures, along with a right hemicolectomy for a terminal ileal stricture. Histological findings demonstrated chronic transmural inflammation and surface ulceration, consistent with Crohn's Disease (CD).

Oral metronidazole was administered for three months, however in view of age and frailty, prophylactic immunosuppression was not commenced. At 18 months post hospitalisation, she was well, asymptomatic and her weight returned to pre-morbid level. Serial faecal calprotectin measurements were normal and there was no biochemical evidence of ongoing malabsorption.

## Discussion:

Spontaneous NF is uncommon, as is the onset of complicated small bowel CD in the elderly. When these two infrequent events occur at the same time, a common link needs to be considered. The co-existence of NF and CD has occasionally been reported, however most refer to the development of NF in known cases of CD. (1)

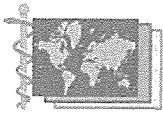
Although the development of Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD) in older individuals is well recognised, it usually involves the colon. (2) Differential diagnoses included non-steroidal anti-

inflammatory drug use, ischaemia, tuberculosis or cryptogenic multifocal ulcerating stenosing enteritis, which in this case were excluded on clinical or histological grounds.

It is recognised that infections can both initiate IBD onset and relapse or be a consequence of the disease process. (3) Although it is theoretically possible that NF may have led to the development of small bowel inflammation in this patient, it seems more plausible that small bowel CD had been present for some time based on the chronic histological changes. We therefore propose that although the CD had been clinically silent, it was a predisposing factor for NF and only unmasked and clinically apparent after the illness.

## References

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- 2) Arnott I, Rogler G, Halfvarson J. The Management of Inflammatory Bowel Disease in Elderly: Current Evidence and Future Perspectives. *Inflamm Intest Dis* 2017;2:189–199
- 3) Irving P, Gibson P. Infections and IBD. *Nat Rev Gastroenterol Hepatol.* 2008 Jan;5(1):18-27



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NAME: Ashleigh Kapnoullas SIGNATURE: 

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10th sept 2021.

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The chicken and the egg: An unusual presentation of Crohn's disease

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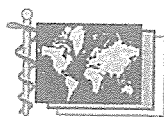
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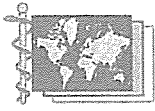
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						ADD
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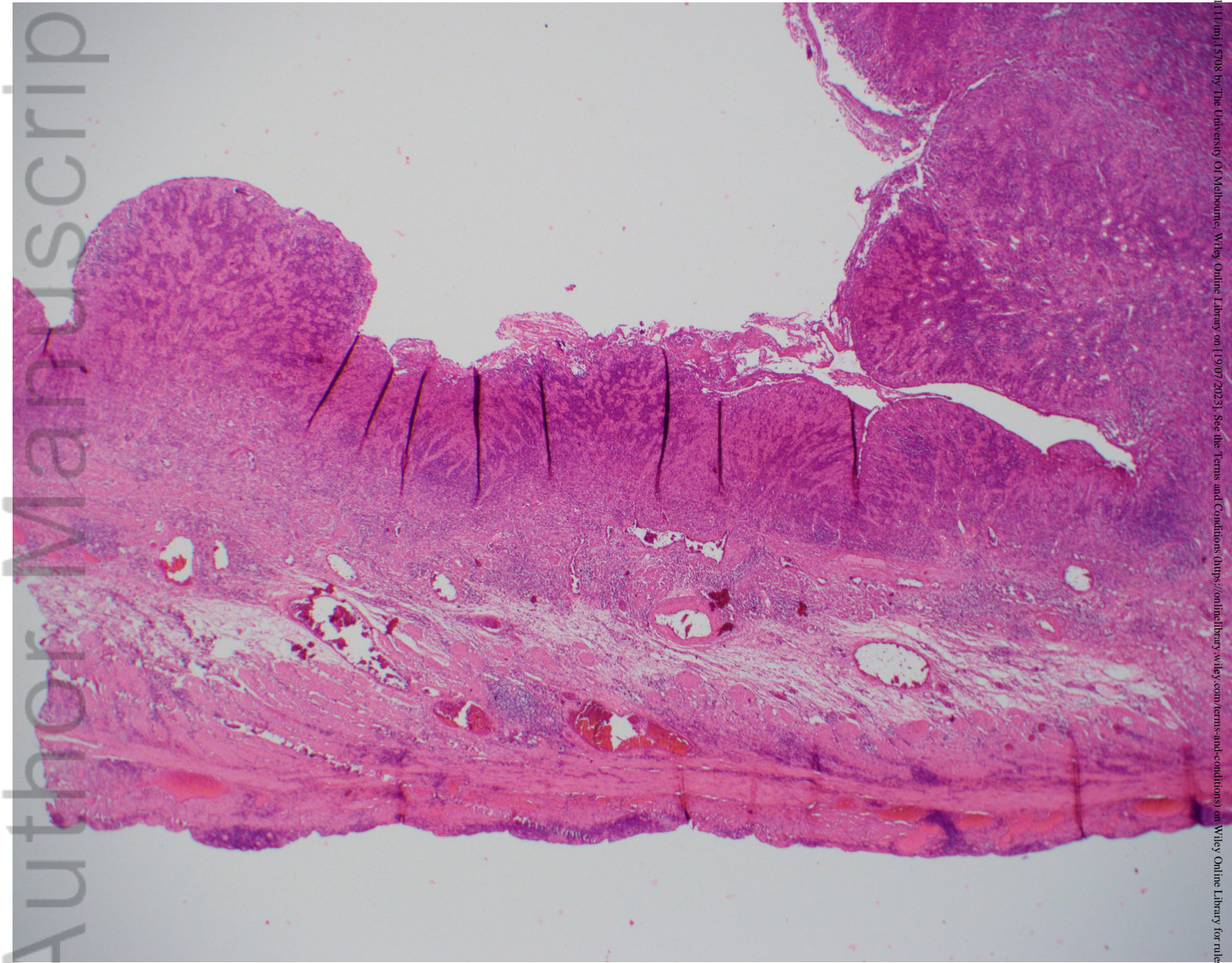


figure 1.jpg

# The chicken or the egg: An unusual presentation of Crohn's disease

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