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Melanosis coli: harmless pigmentation? A case-control retrospective study of 657 cases

DOI:10.17504/protocols.io.j6rcrd6

Type: Protocol

Proper Citation

Zhong Hui LIU, Dominic Chi Chung Foo, Wai Lun LAW, Fion Siu Yin CHAN, Joe King Man FAN, Jun Sheng PENG 2017. Melanosis coli: harmless pigmentation? A case-control retrospective study of 657 cases. protocols.io dx.doi.org/10.17504/protocols.io.j6rcrd6

Protocol Information

URL: <https://dx.doi.org/10.17504/protocols.io.j6rcrd6>

Authors: Zhong Hui LIU, Dominic Chi Chung Foo, Wai Lun LAW, Fion Siu Yin CHAN, Joe King Man FAN, Jun Sheng PENG

Summary: Backgrounds and aims: The association of melanosis coli with the development of colorectal polyps remains uncertain. Methods: From a total of 18263 patients who had received colonoscopy in our hospital, 219 with melanosis coli cases and 438 controls matched by age and sex (at 1:2 ratio) were included in this study. The association of incidence, number, location, and pathology of colorectal neoplasm with grades and distribution of melanosis coli were analyzed. Results: Melanosis coli was associated with significantly more colorectal polyps than control, a higher incidence of numerous colorectal polyps (number ≥ 20) (7.3% vs 0.5%; $p = 0.01$). Patients with melanosis coli had higher incidences of low-grade adenomas (31.1% vs 23.3%, p the controls). On multivariate analysis, melanosis coli was independently associated with increased detecting rates of low grade adenoma (OR = 1.54; 95%: 1.06-2.23; $p = .05$), non-adenoma polyp (OR = 1.72; 95%: 1.11-2.70; p (OR = 16.2, 95%: 3.66-71.6; p incidence of high-grade adenomas or adenocarcinomas in the two population groups, but the numbers of these lesions were insufficient to permit firm conclusions. No significant differences in incidence, number, and pathology of colorectal polyps between individuals with melanosis coli of three different grades of severity were found. Melanosis located predominantly in the right colon had an interestingly lower incidence of colonic polyps in right colon than did melanosis located predominantly in the left colon or total colon (8.9% vs. 26.3%, 24.0%, p had significantly more nonspecific distal ileal ulcers than did controls (8.0% vs 0%, $p = 0.001$). Conclusion: Melanosis coli is associated with a higher incidence and number of colonic non-adenoma polyps and low-grade adenomas, and higher incidence of distal ileal ulcers. Melanosis coli may not be a harmless pigmentation, but a sign of chronic injury of colonic and intestinal mucosa.

Associated Publications: Liu ZH, Foo DCC, Law WL, Chan FSY, Fan JKM, Peng JS (2017) Melanosis coli: Harmless pigmentation? A case-control retrospective study of 657 cases. PLoS ONE 12(10): e0186668. doi: [10.1371/journal.pone.0186668](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0186668)

Affiliations: The University of Hong Kong-Shenzhen Hospital, Shenzhen, China, The University of Hong Kong, HKSAR, China, The University of Hong Kong, HKSAR, China, The University of Hong Kong, HKSAR, China, The University of Hong Kong, HKSAR, China, The Sixth Affiliated Hospital of Sun Yat-sen University, Guangzhou, Guangdong Province, China

External URL: <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0186668>

Version: 1

Publication Date: 2017

Proper Citation: Zhong Hui LIU, Dominic Chi Chung Foo, Wai Lun LAW, Fion Siu Yin CHAN, Joe King Man FAN, Jun Sheng PENG 2017. Melanosis coli: harmless pigmentation? A case-control retrospective study of 657 cases. protocols.io dx.doi.org/10.17504/protocols.io.j6rcrd6

Record Creation Time: 20210329T220539+0000

Record Last Update: 20210329T221054+0000

Data and Source Information

Source: