Patients With Eosinophilic Esophagitis and Gastrointestinal Symptoms May Have Eosinophilic Gastritis and/or Duodenitis, Not Associated With Peak Esophageal Eosinophil Count

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Eosinophilic gastrointestinal (GI) disorders are chronic inflammatory conditions characterized by aberrant, localized accumulation and activation of eosinophils and mast cells. Eosinophilic esophagitis (EoE) is the best understood of these disorders, but there is evidence that eosinophilic gastritis and/or duodenitis (EG/EoD) are more prevalent than previously thought. Many patients with EoE have extra-esophageal GI symptoms that are unlikely to be caused by inflammation limited to the esophagus. These patients may have EG and/or EoD, which are missed if gastric and duodenal biopsies are not systematically collected and evaluated for eosinophils.

**Background**

**Objective**

- We recruited patients with EoE previously evaluated by esophagogastroduodenoscopy (EGD) and whose gastroduodenal biopsies were reported to be normal or have non-specific inflammation.
- Patients were grouped by presence or absence of extra-esophageal symptoms:
  - We identified 52 EoE patients with extra-esophageal GI symptoms (abdominal pain, nausea, bloating, and/or irritable bowel syndrome [IBS]) who had stomach and small bowel biopsies interpreted as non-specific inflammation — this group was called EoE+S.
  - 15 EoE patients without extra-esophageal GI symptoms were included as a control group, called EoE–S.
- Biopsies taken at the initial evaluation were stained with hematoxylin and eosin and evaluated by a blinded, central pathologist for eosinophil counts and morphology.
- We also collected data on endoscopic features and functional gastrointestinal symptoms.

**Methods**

**Results**

- After excluding patients with gastric or duodenal surgeries, opioid dependence, systemic immunosuppression, Helicobacter pylori, or loss of tissue, we evaluated 45 EoE+S patients and 12 EoE–S patients.
- Common symptoms among EoE+S patients were abdominal pain, bloating, nausea, and IBS.
- EoE+S patients had undergone as many as 6 tests, in addition to EGD, to evaluate their extra-esophageal symptoms.
- All patients had prior pathology reports of non-specific inflammation or normal tissue.
- Our blinded re-assessment of biopsies found that:
  - 53% (24/45) EoE+S patients met histologic criteria for EG/EoD:
  - 145% (2) had EG only (≥30 eos in 3 duodenal hpf) in ≥5 gastric hpf
  - 16/45 (36%) EoE+S patients had ≥3 duodenal hpf
  - 7/16% (16) had concomitant EG and EoD
  - None of the EoE–S patients met histologic criteria for EG/EoD.
- EG–EoD, EoE–S patients had peak eosinophil counts of 58±14 in gastric biopsies.
- EoD ±EG, EoE+S patients had peak eosinophil counts of 57±19 in duodenal biopsies.
- EoE–S patients had peak counts of 11±7 in gastric and 35±21 in duodenal biopsies.

**Conclusions/Discussion**

- In patients with EoE and extra-esophageal GI symptoms (EoE+S), review of gastric and duodenal biopsies previously reported to be normal or have non-specific inflammation revealed that 53% patients have EG and/or EoD, based on histologic criteria.
- These findings indicate that gastric and duodenal eosinophils should be counted in patients with EoE and persistent non-esophageal GI symptoms.
- Increased awareness of EG and EoE and consensus diagnostic criteria may lead to identification of undiagnosed patients with EG and/or EoD.
- Proper diagnosis of EG and EoD could lead to treatment of gastric and/or duodenal inflammation and symptoms.

**Table 1. Baseline Characteristics of EoE Patients**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Patient Characteristics</th>
<th>Symptoms (EoE+S)</th>
<th>Symptoms (EoE–S)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age (years)</td>
<td>41±11</td>
<td>42±10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male sex</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>87%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Initial gastric pathology</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normal</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-specific inflammation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial duodenal pathology</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normal</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>100%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Non-specific inflammation</td>
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<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Types of additional tests performed</td>
<td>3±2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figures**

1. Pathogenesis of Eosinophilic GI Disorders
2. Functional GI Symptoms in Patients With EoE
3. Gastric and Duodenal Morphologic Features of EoE Patients, With and Without GI Symptoms
4. Peak Eosinophil Counts in EoE Patients With and Without GI Symptoms