INTRODUCTION
Multiple myeloma is a form of cancer characterized by proliferation of plasma cells and monoclonal immunoglobulin in the bone marrow. Most patients suffer from bone damage and complications of such including bone pain, pathological fracture and hypercalcaemia, renal insufficiency and anaemia. Amyloidosis is a kind of conformational disease characterized by extracellular deposition of insoluble fibrillar protein, called amyloid, in various organs and tissues. To date, at least 24 different proteins have been recognized as causative agents of amyloid disease (1). All the deposits share a common core structure of β-pleated configuration and can produce apple-green birefringence under polarized light when stained with Congo red dye (2, 3).

According to the distribution of amyloid deposits, amyloidosis can be classified as systemic or localized. Light-chain (AL) amyloidosis is the most common form of systemic amyloidosis with 12–15% of patients having multiple myeloma, but most are asymptomatic (4). There are less reports of multiple myeloma manifesting as gastric retention as a result of amyloidosis.

CASE REPORT
A 62-year old woman was admitted to hospital with the main complaint of upper abdominal pain with nausea and vomiting for three months. Gastroscopy from another hospital showed decreased gastric peristalsis and gastric retention. On admission, the patient displayed mucosal pallor and the skin of the peri-orbital, neck and abdomen was waxen yellow. There was mild pitting oedema of the lower extremities. Papular lesions were found in the peri-orbital and abdominal wall (Fig. A). Physical examination revealed tenderness of the upper abdomen. The rest of the examination was unremarkable.
Laboratory data showed red blood cells $3.19 \times 10^{12}/L$, haemoglobin 98 g/L, white blood cell $8.6 \times 10^{9}/L$, platelet $269 \times 10^{9}/L$, albumin 27 g/L, total protein 45 g/L, alanine transaminase (ALT) 42 U/L, lactic dehydrogenase (LDH) 725 U/L, serum creatinine 108 mmol/L, urea 9.0 mmol/L, uric acid 471.7 mmol/L, potassium 2.8 mmol/L, serum sodium 132 mmol/L and serum calcium 2.1 mmol/L. The stool examination and occult blood test, rheumatoid factor, antistreptolysin O, C-reactive protein, ANA (antinuclear antibodies) and tumour markers were within normal. Endoscopy showed thickness of the gastric wall, narrow gastric cavity, distortion of the pylorus and there was no gastric peristalsis. The diagnosis of gastric antral cancer was made by endoscopy. Histopathological examination of the biopsy material showed massive eosinophilic amorphous material located in the submucosa (Fig. B) and stained characteristically positive with Congo-red, confirming amyloid deposition (Fig. C). The patient got nutritional support and antacid treatment. Gastroscopy was done a fortnight later and histopathological examination of the biopsy material showed amyloid deposition with chronic inflammation.

The diagnosis was then made of AL amyloidosis with skin and gastrointestinal involvement. The serum protein electrophoresis showed IgA, 0.16 g/L; IgM, 0.22 g/L and IgG, 4.76 g/L; κ light chain was 3.77 g/L, lambda light-chain was 7.68 g/L, the ratio was 0.49. $\beta_2$-microglobulin:8604 mg/L; 24-hour urine protein was 306 mg/L. The patient had bone marrow aspiration which revealed marrow plasmacytosis (35% plasma cells) in accordance with multiple myeloma (Fig. D). We concluded that the patient suffered from multiple myeloma associated with AL amyloidosis.
**DISCUSSION**

Multiple myeloma is a plasma cell dyscrasia characterized by monoclonal immunoglobulin production in the bone marrow. Most patients have bone pain, pathological fracture, hypercalcaemia, anaemia and renal insufficiency. Light-chain amyloidosis is a rare disease in which insoluble immunoglobulin light chain fragments are produced and polymerize into fibrils that deposit extracellularly, causing organ dysfunction and death. Twelve to fifteen per cent of myeloma patients have extracellular deposition of amyloid in tissues, resulting in amyloidosis. In these patients, symptoms frequently will manifest as nephrotic syndrome, congestive heart failure or restrictive cardiomyopathy, hepatomegaly, splenomegaly, carpal tunnel syndrome, macroglossia and waxy-looking papules (5).

Amyloid deposition in the gastrointestinal tract is also common but usually asymptomatic. Rarely is gastrointestinal amyloidosis the main symptom of multiple myeloma. The amyloid deposits in the gastrointestinal mucosa, muscles and blood vessels present as stasis syndrome: nausea, vomiting, dysphagia, gastroparesis, gastroesophageal reflux, loss of appetite, constipation, even chronic intestinal pseudo-obstruction because of gastrointestinal dysmotility, or current gastrointestinal bleeding resulting from ulcers or erosions (6). When a lot of amyloid accumulations contribute to tumour-like amyloidoma, it is difficult to differentiate this from stomach cancer; mucosa biopsy with histology is the only way to differentiate. In the index patient, the diagnosis was difficult because symptoms were nonspecific whether for multiple myeloma or AL amyloidosis.

The presence of amyloidosis in multiple myeloma patients is usually associated with poor survival, and death usually occurs as a complication of amyloidosis affecting major organs, especially cardiac involvement (7). Some researchers revealed that the presence of amyloid deposits in patients with multiple myeloma is an independent adverse prognostic factor, and they suggest that the routine study of periumbilical fat-pad tissue should be mandatory in all patients with multiple myeloma (8).

The principles of treatment in systemic amyloidosis involves reducing amyloid formation by suppressing the synthesis of the fibril-precursor protein or promoting its clearance (9), coupled with appropriate supportive measures. Preservation or recovery of the function of amyloidotic organs is crucial. For localized amyloidosis, organ transplantation or resection is the best therapy (10, 11). High-dose melphalan chemotherapy and autologous peripheral blood stem cell transplantation (HDM/SCT) can prolong overall survival and get durable haematologic response in patients with multiple myeloma as well as those with AL amyloidosis who are eligible to receive it (12). However, due to amyloid-associated organ dysfunction, only selected patients may be eligible for HDM/SCT. In patients who are not eligible for peripheral blood stem cell transplant, melphalan plus dexamethasone can also produce long-term remissions in AL amyloidosis (13). Other chemotherapeutic regimens such as CyBorD (cyclophosphamide, bortezomib and dexamethasone) or CTD (cyclophosphamide, thalidomide and dexamethasone) are also helpful (14, 15).

The index patient began to receive chemotherapy after the diagnosis of multiple myeloma. The chemotherapeutic regimen was cyclophosphamide 800 mg and vindesine 3 mg on the first day, plus pirarubicin (20 mg per day on days 1 to 2) and dexamethasone (20 mg per day on days 1 to 5). Unfortunately, because of chemotherapeutic toxicity, the patient suffered from serious gastrointestinal upset and myocardial injuries. On the third day of the chemotherapy, she had a cardiorespiratory arrest and developed grave metabolic acidosis. The hepatic and renal functions progressively declined. The patient died from multiple organ failure.

Although involvement of the gastrointestinal tract in primary amyloidosis is common, amyloid deposition on the stomach due to multiple myeloma is rare and indicates a poor prognosis. Due to the fact that endoscopic findings of gastrointestinal amyloidosis are identical to gastric cancer, gastrointestinal amyloidosis should be considered among the differential diagnosis of gastric cancer. When the diagnosis of amyloidosis is established, the second step, guided by clinical symptoms, is to identify the type of amyloidosis and to investigate other sites of amyloid deposition.

**REFERENCES**


