



Fetal cholelithiasis: Is there true stones in the fetal gallbladder?

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Objective

Fetal cholelithiasis is an uncommon finding during the antenatal period. Despite the remarkable number of researches on fetal sonography, little is known about the natural history of fetal cholelithiasis. The purpose of this study is to present the sonographic findings and postnatal outcomes of fetal cholelithiasis and to determine whether the echogenicities in fetal gallbladder are true stones.

Methods

We designed a prospective study (from May 2015 to January 2018) with 14400 pregnant patients in the second and third trimester. The cases with fetal cholelithiasis detected by obstetric ultrasonography were evaluated in the neonatal period. The postnatal sonographic examination was performed twice (at 2 months and sixth months of the neonatal life). Written informed consent was taken from all of the patients.

Results

There was no cholelithiasis in any of the fetuses before 29 weeks. Among 4056 fetuses (29-42 gestational weeks), 32 fetuses were found to have echogenic contents in their gallbladder. Postnatal sonographic examination detected that echogenicities in the gallbladder were resolved spontaneously in all cases in six months.

Conclusion

Despite the unknown etiopathogenesis of the fetal cholelithiasis, the spontaneous resolution of the gallstones in neonatal period seems to be explained. To the best of our knowledge, the cholelithiasis in adulthood doesn't present spontaneous resolution. So the echogenicities in fetal gallbladder may not be true gallstones according to our experience. Further studies may reveal whether the gallbladder echogenicities are true stones in fetal period.