

# Human Intestinal Capillariasis: A Case Report

Karthik Adiraju<sup>1</sup>, Phani Harshitha Yarlalagadda<sup>2</sup>, Dinesh Kalwa<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>MBBS, Kamineni Institute of Medical Sciences, 404, Sai Krishna Thakur Residency, Padmarao Nagar Station Road, Hyderabad 500025, India

<sup>2</sup>MBBS, Intern, Kamineni Institute of Medical Sciences,

<sup>3</sup>MBBS, Kamineni Institute of Medical Sciences

**Abstract:** Human intestinal capillariasis is a rare zoonotic parasitosis. Capillariasis can be life threatening if unrecognized and left untreated. The parasitosis is clinically characterized by chronic gastroenteritis, abdominal pain, borborygmus, weight loss, protein loss and dyselectrolytemia. We report one such case of a 40 year old female who presented with chronic diarrhea, vomiting, generalized anasarca. Patient's stool examination was positive for Capillaria eggs and she responded to treatment with albendazole.

**Keywords:** Capillariasis, zoonotic parasitosis, Trichinelloidea, whip worm, gastroenteritis

## 1. Introduction

Capillaria philippinensis is one of the only four species of the capillariids found in humans (of the >250 species of capillaria) namely c. philippinensis, c. hepatica, c. aerophila, c. plica. The human intestinal capillariasis is endemic in Philippines and Thailand. It has spread geographically since then and sporadic cases have been reported from Egypt, Korea, Taiwan, Iran, Spain etc (1). In India, after the first case report by Kang et al in 1994, there have been very few cases reported so far. Human intestinal capillariasis is a zoonotic disease that occurs in most reported cases in individuals who eat raw or undercooked fish. But, cases have been reported especially from non-endemic areas in individuals who denied ever eating raw or undercooked fish. (These cases are thought to be secondary to eating food contaminated with uncooked visceral contents of fish). Intestinal capillariasis can cause serious disease and be fatal if not diagnosed and treated in time. Hence, a degree of suspicion is required, especially in cases of chronic diarrhea.

## 2. Case Report

A forty year old female patient who is an agricultural laborer by occupation and resident of Nalagonda district of Andhra Pradesh presented to us with complaints of diarrhea, 10-15 episodes of loose watery yellowish non foul smelling stools per day since two months, colicky abdominal pain since two months, vomiting non-bilious, non-projectile since one month, swelling of feet which gradually progressed to generalized body swelling with distension of abdomen over a period of a month. On examination patient had anasarca. She was moderately dehydrated. Her pulse 90/min, BP 90/60 mmHg, temperature a febrile. Her cardiovascular, respiratory and central nervous system examination was within normal limits, abdomen was distended with ascites showing shifting dullness, and there was no apparent organomegaly. Investigations: CBP and CUE were normal, ESR-10mm/hr, RBS-91 mg/dl, urea-25 mg/dl, creatinine-0.6 mg/dl, serum sodium-121 mmol/l, potassium-2.4 mmol/l, chloride-79 mmol/l. Her serum total proteins-3.7 g/dl and serum albumin-0.7 g/dl were low, 24 hour urinary

protein was within normal limits (43 mg). LFT-normal. Ascitic fluid was transudate with protein of 0.2 g/l. Ascitic fluid ADA-8.44 IU/l was within normal limits. Her stool examination showed numerous peanut shaped eggs with flattened bipolar plugs measuring about 36-45 x 20 micrometers suggestive of capillaria philippinensis (fig1), subsequent stool examination showed few dead adult worms. Upper G.I endoscopy revealed erosive antral gastritis, colonoscopy revealed sub epithelial hemorrhages in ascending and transverse colon. Scattered erosive mucosal lesions with loss of villi and whitish exudates are observed in distal ileum (Fig2). Biopsy specimen of jejunum was normal.

## 3. Discussion

In 2009, Rana SS et al<sup>2</sup> described how jejunal fluid analysis could be used to diagnose intestinal capillariasis. To the best of our knowledge, our case is the third attempt to describe about capillariasis in our country.

The genus Capillaria is a nematode member of the super family Trichinelloidea, which includes Trichuri and Trichinella spp. Although more than 250 Capillaria species have been found in fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds, and mammals, only 4 species have been found in humans: Capillaria hepatica, C. aerophila (Eucoleus aerophilus), C. plica, and C. philippinensis.<sup>3</sup> Capillaria philippinensis is the only species that causes severe disease. It may be endemic but also can cause epidemics.

The life cycle of C. philippinensis (fig3) involves a small freshwater or brackish water fish harboring the infectious stages in their viscera. Natural definitive hosts are fish-eating birds. Human become infected when they consume raw or insufficiently cooked fish or, less often, ichthyophagic birds. Handling fish under poor sanitary conditions may contaminate other foods and favor indirect transmission. In humans, the parasite is not opportunistic (disseminated) but is usually restricted to the small intestine where it develops, reproduces, and where the female lays eggs that mature into larvae. A notable feature is that these larvae may engage in an auto-infection circle, which may produce high parasitic

load. Parasitic products may interfere with ionic exchanges and carbohydrate and protein absorption of the intestinal epithelium, which produces a protein-losing enteropathy that is an outstanding feature of capillariasis.

The clinical features in our case were consistent with other case reports from Philippines and Thailand. The diagnosis in our case was based on the identification of organism's ova in the stool. However there were no adult worms on endoscopy and only a few dead in stool examination. Jejunal biopsy was normal in our case. There was a report of intestinal capillariasis diagnosed by endoscopy in a child. The gastroduodenoscopy showed normal jejunal mucosa although histological sections revealed flattened villi, crypt proliferation, acute inflammation, and eosinophilic granulomata. In another case report, histological study of jejunal mucosa demonstrated small nematodes lying in a mucosal crypt.

In our case the patient responded clinically to albendazole 200mg twice daily given for 1 month. Also there was a clearance of the ova on stool examination and patient's serum albumin gradually improved. Albendazole is presently considered the drug of choice for the treatment of human intestinal capillariasis because it is effective against eggs, larvae, and adult worms. To avoid frequent relapses, high dosages and prolonged (3-4 weeks) or sequential treatments have been advocated. All compounds of the azole family of drugs are effective.

#### 4. Management and Outcome

Patient was treated with Tablet Albendazole 200 mg twice daily for one month. She also received supportive therapy in the form of I.V fluids to correct dehydration and dyselectrolytemia. Salt free albumin infusion was given to correct hypoalbuminemia. Patient recovered well with

gradual improvement in symptoms and her stools are free of organisms.

#### 5. Conclusion

Early diagnosis is very important, considering the fact that infection results in a severe disease with a high mortality rate. A meticulous examination of the stool sample by an experienced microbiologist is the easiest way to diagnose the disease. Endoscopic- pathologic examination of the jejunum can be useful in stool negative cases. To conclude, Intestinal capillariasis needs to be considered in the differential diagnosis of patients with chronic diarrhea, abdominal pain and marked weight loss and is treated with Albendazole, the drug of choice.

#### 6. Figures

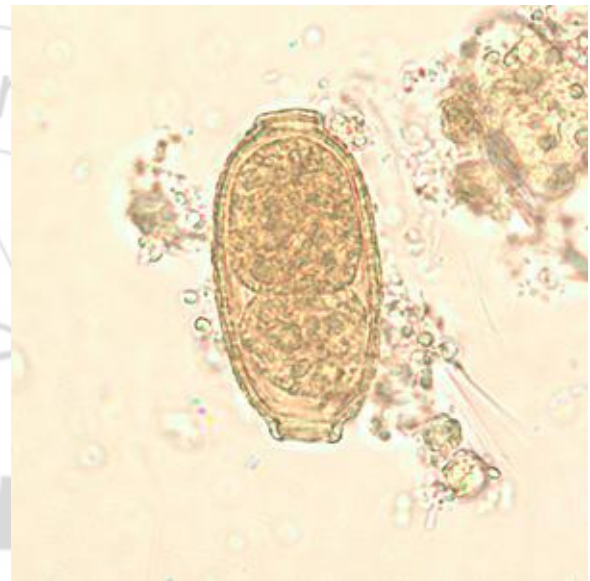


Figure 1: Stool sample showing eggs of C. Philippinensis

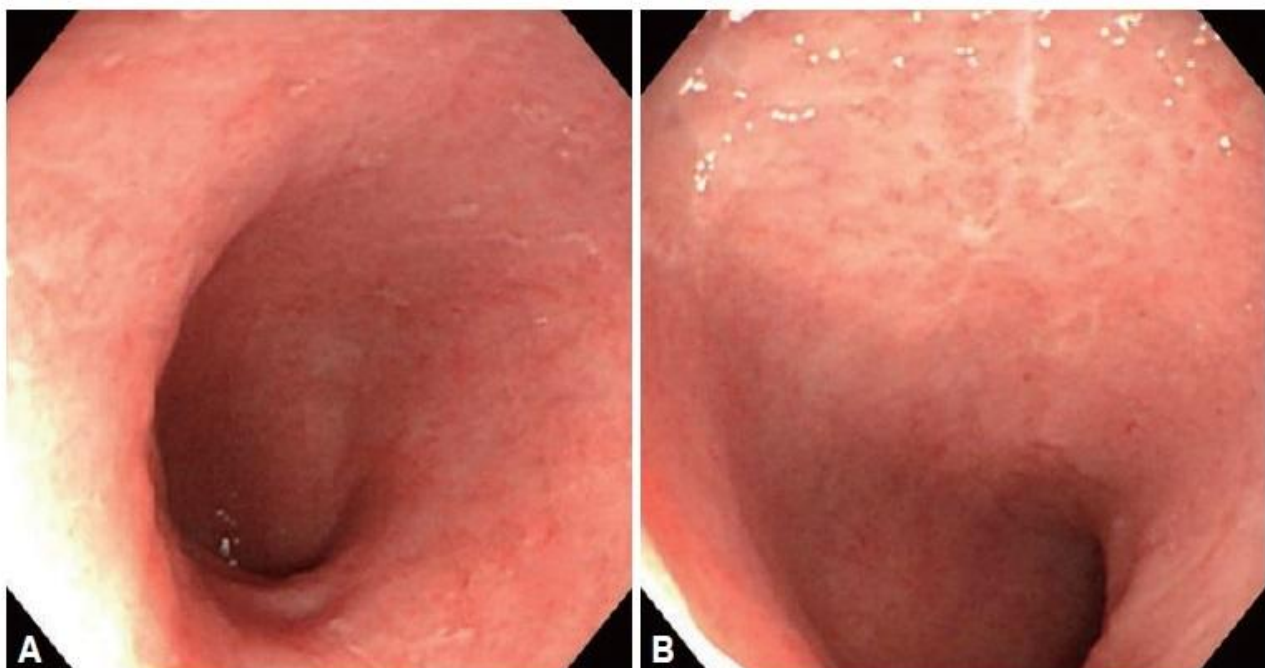


Figure 2: Endoscopy showing erosive mucosal lesions in distal ileum

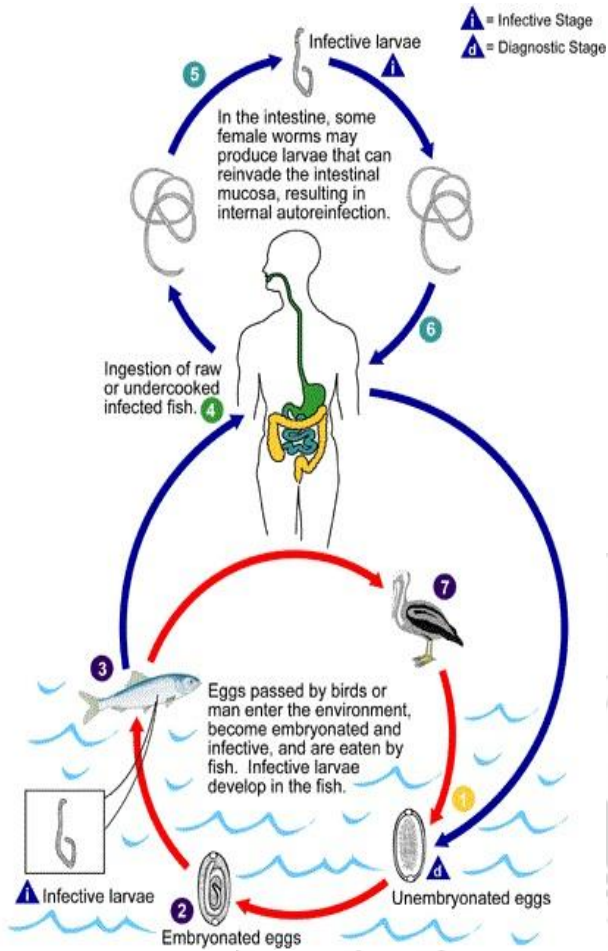


Figure 3: Outline of life cycle of *C. philippinensis*

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