## Case Report

# Lessons learned from a case of multivessel median arcuate ligament syndrome in the setting of an Arc of Buhler 

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#### Abstract

The median arcuate ligament (MAL) can rarely compress both the celiac axis and superior mesenteric artery. We present a case of a 70 -year male who presented with isolated episodes of upper abdominal pain and diarrhea associated with sweats and nausea. Angiography images demonstrated complete occlusion of the celiac axis and compression of the superior mesenteric artery during the expiration phases. The celiac axis was reconstituted distal to its origin by a patent Arc of Buhler. Other reported cases of multivessel MALs have produced severe symptoms in young adults requiring surgical and/or endovascular intervention. In this case, our patient's Arc of Buhler was protective against more severe chronic mesenteric ischemia. We suggest that a patent Arc of Buhler is protective against symptoms in a single vessel MALs patient. A significant percentage of patients receiving surgical intervention for MALs do not have relief of symptoms. There should be a search for an Arc of Buhler before surgical management of patients suspected to have single vessel MALs. © 2016 the Authors. Published by Elsevier Inc. under copyright license from the University of Washington. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (http://


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## Introduction

The median arcuate ligament (MAL) can compress the celiac axis causing symptoms of chronic mesenteric ischemia. This condition is referred to as median arcuate ligament syndrome (MALS) and poses a diagnostic challenge. MALS is predominantly understood as a syndrome of celiac artery compression. In fact, MALS is also referred to as celiac artery compression syndrome. The MAL can also compress the
ostium of the superior mesenteric artery (SMA), although this is quite uncommon. A rare connection between the celiac axis and the SMA is the Arc of Buhler [1,2]. The Arc of Buhler has been described as protective in cases of mesenteric ischemia [2]. There are very few cases in the literature describing MAL compression of both the celiac trunk and SMA. To our knowledge, there are no cases in the literature describing multivessel compression by the MAL with an Arc of Buhler. We present a case of celiac axis occlusion and variable

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Fig. 1 - Sagittal CT angiogram demonstrating complete occlusion of the celiac axis at its ostium (blue arrow) and apparent narrowing of the SMA (green arrow) by the MAL (orange arrow). CT, computed tomography; MAL, median arcuate ligament; SMA, superior mesentric artery.
compression of the SMA by the MAL in a 70 -year-old man with a prominent Arc of Buhler and symptoms of intermittent intestinal angina.

## Case report

A 70-year-old man presented with isolated episodes of upper abdominal pain and diarrhea associated with sweats and nausea. These episodes had a duration of 30 minutes and were intermittent in nature. The patient was known for having chronic abdominal pain, which was diagnosed as "irritable bowel syndrome". Other pertinent medical history included a longstanding history of hypertension and mitral valve prolapse. The patient was referred to the gastroenterology service for evaluation of his symptoms. A computed tomography scan was ordered to search for anatomic or mechanical causes of the diarrhea.

The computed tomography scan demonstrated complete occlusion of the celiac axis and stenosis of the ostium of the SMA by the MAL (Fig. 1).

The patient was referred to interventional radiology for further evaluation of the celiac axis and SMA. The angiography images again demonstrated a complete occlusion of the celiac axis at its origin and compression of the SMA during the expiration phases. During the inspiration phase of the


Fig. 2 - Angiography of the SMA during inspiration. SMA, superior mesentric artery.
arteriogram, the SMA appeared widely patent (Fig. 2); however, during the expiration phase, there was a significant compression of the SMA (Fig. 3). The celiac axis was reconstituted distal to its origin by a dilated and widely patent Arc of Buhler (Fig. 4).


Fig. 3 - Angiography of the SMA during expiration. SMA, superior mesentric artery.

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