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## Interventional Radiology

## Endovascular retrieval of foreign body in persistent left-sided superior vena cava

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## ABSTRACT

Endovascular retrieval of a foreign body is becoming an increasingly common procedure in the management of complications resulting from more frequent endovascular procedures. Many procedures are performed on a regular basis in assessment of vascular anatomy, endovascular-guided therapy, and catheter placement. This case report depicts a complication of a chemoport placement resulting in a foreign body. Evaluation of the foreign body raised attention to aberrant anatomy, a persistent left-sided superior vena cava. We further discuss briefly the embryology behind a persistent left-sided superior vena cava, technical errors leading to the foreign body, and assessing the nature of the foreign body through different imaging modalities. This is followed by the subsequent endovascular retrieval by Interventional Radiology and a literature review and individual case assessment of endovascular foreign body retrieval. We discuss considerations for practice based upon our literature review.

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## Case report

We present the case of a 52-year-old female with clinical stage IIB ductal carcinoma ER-, PR-, Her2, of the right breast confirmed by core needle biopsy. A positron emission tomography (PET) scan confirmed axillary node involvement without any

other nodal involvement or metastasis; however, the mass was abutting the pectoralis muscle. Following a multidiscipline tumor board discussion, the plan was to begin with neoadjuvant chemotherapy.

The patient presented through ambulatory surgery for operative Chemoport placement. The planned site of access was the left subclavian vein due to right breast cancer and concern

Disclosures: None.

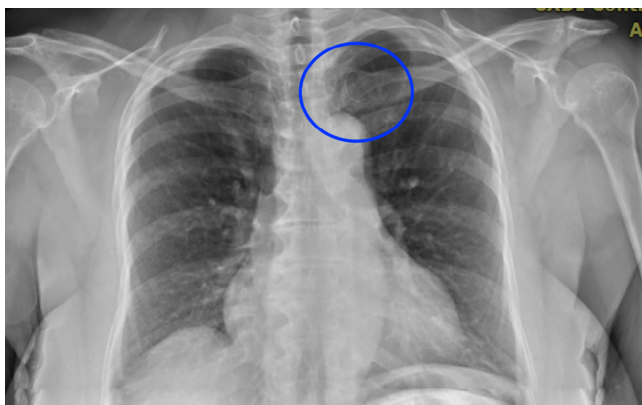
Authors' contributions: Michael Segal: Primary author, involved in IR/General case, primary correspondent. Andres Krauthamer: Interventional radiologist involved with case and editing report. Brian Hall: General surgeon involved with case and editing report. Kenneth Hassler: Secondary author writing/editing paper. Stephen Carryl: Editing paper.

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**Fig. 1 – Anteroposterior Chest X-ray displaying a retained portion of guidewire in the left chest.**

for future right-sided intervention. The introducer needle was inserted successfully into the left subclavian vein and confirmed by venous aspiration. Upon passage of the guidewire under fluoroscopic guidance, the guidewire was noted to be in an aberrant position. As the guidewire was manipulated and withdrawn through the introducer needle, it was noted that a portion of the guidewire had sheared off and was retained as a foreign body. This is seen on the postprocedural chest X-ray (Fig. 1). At this point the procedure was aborted and the presumed Chemoport subcutaneous pocket was closed.

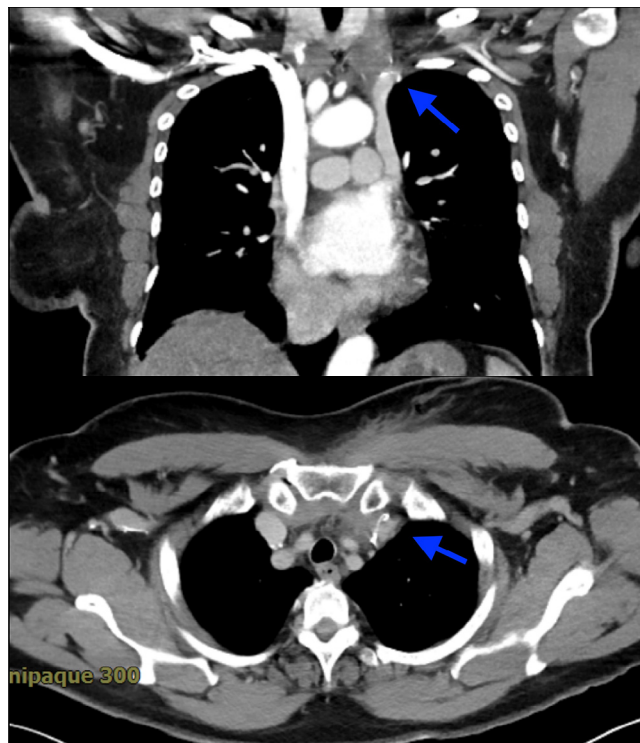
A postoperative computed tomography (CT) chest with contrast was obtained to further evaluate the positioning of the foreign body (Supplementary Image Stack S1, S2). The CT images demonstrated a persistent left superior vena cava (SVC) with a partially intravascular retained guidewire at the junction of the left brachiocephalic and SVC junction (Fig. 2).

At this point, Interventional Radiology was consulted and the patient was taken for endovascular retrieval of the foreign body. A 5Fr sheath was introduced into the left basilic vein. A venogram was performed to define and further delineate the anatomy (Fig. 3). With the assistance of a 5Fr guiding catheter, an endovascular gooseneck snare was used to capture the foreign body (Fig. 4). The guidewire was then retrieved without significant resistance through an endovascular approach (Fig. 5).

Upon completion of the retrieval, a Hickman catheter was inserted in the persistent left SVC without any complications (Fig. 6). Patient has since successfully received multiple courses of neoadjuvant chemotherapy via the placed Hickman catheter.

## Discussion

Endovascular retrieval of a foreign body is becoming an increasingly more common procedure in the management of complications resulting from more frequent endovascular procedures. Many procedures are performed on a regular basis in assessment of vascular anatomy, endovascular-guided therapy, and catheter placement. Retrieval of these intravascular foreign bodies can now be accomplished at a low risk and serve to potentially prevent serious complications caused by migration of a guidewire fragment intravascularly [1]. Current literature,



**Fig. 2 – Computed tomography (CT) chest with intravenous contrast with 3-mm helical axial imaging and coronal reformation displaying rudimentary left superior vena cava (SVC) with retained guidewire at the left brachiocephalic junction.**

however, is trending toward leaving venous foreign bodies in situ due to clinically lower observed complication rates than older literature had originally inferred [2]. With this in mind, endovascular retrieval should be approached with caution.

The embryonic development of the heart begins early in fetal life. At 3 weeks, the endocardial tubes fuse together into a primary heart. Following this development, sulci divide the heart tube into sections including the sinus venosus, into which the common cardinal veins, the umbilical veins, and the vitelline veins drain. The common cardinal veins then differentiate into an anterior and medial cardinal vein [3]. Typically, the left anterior cardinal veins obliterate, leaving only the oblique vein of Marshall as a remnant. It is the failure of the left cardinal vein to obliterate that leads to the development of a “persistent” left-sided SVC.

The presence of a “persistent” left-sided SVC may be identified in the preoperative period. However, investigation is typically foregone due to the low prevalence. A persistent left-sided SVC is present in 0.3%-0.5% of the general population, and is more frequently noted in 10% of those with congenital heart disease [3]. In our case, there was no identification of a persistent left-sided SVC on preoperative imaging reports or 2D echo. Typically, dilation of the coronary sinus is the first hint of this anomaly due to the direct drainage from the left-sided SVC [4]. Again, this was not noted in the preoperative Echo report. Echo may be limited by acoustic windows and will have a lower sensitivity to diagnose such an anomaly. Additionally, review of the PET scan for vasculature anatomy was not performed and no radiologic notation of the anomaly on

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