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Assessment of adhesion to treatment of patients being on kidney replacement therapy taking into account the presence of type 2 diabetes mellitus

Kyrian O.A., Derkach I.A., Dorofeyev A.E., Rudenko M.M.

Changes in the intestinal microbiota in patients with ulcerative colitis and irritable bowel syndrome combined with urolithiasis

Kochuieva M.M., Psarova V.G., Tymchenko H.A., Komissarova O.S., Marchenko A.V., Tymchenko M.Ye., Zaikina Yu.O.

Clinical and laboratory features of patients with comorbid association of bronchial asthma and obesity

Levenets S.S., Horobets N.M., Kirzhner G.D., Sabadash V.Ye.

Intestinal microflora in children with infantile colic

Leshchii N.P., Pakhomova N.G., Baranets I.V., Kulbida S.V., Yanovskaya T.A., Sheremet M.K., Suprun M.O.

Features of the physical and psycho-emotional state of children with complex developmental disorders

Lokes K.P., Lychman V.O., Steblovsky D.V., Bondarenko V.V., Avetikov D.S.

Dynamics of changes of C-reactive protein in the serum content in patients with phlegmons of the jaws and facial localization at different terms of treatment

Loskutov A.L., Loskutova I.V.

Innate immunity in osteoarthritis in comorbidity with non-alcoholic steatohepatitis in patients with helicobacter pylori infection

Maharramov P.M.

Frequency and risk factors of complications of surgical treatment of corneal diseases

Makieiev V.F., Telishevskaya O.D., Mykhailevych M.Yu.

The value and importance of anamnesis in the differential diagnosis of temporomandibular disorders

Mankovskiy D.S.

Personification of the risk of hypoxic-ischemic brain injury in the system of neurological monitoring of cardiac surgery patients

Maruta N.O., Kolyadko S.P., Fedchenko V.Y., Panko T.V., Cherednyakova O.S., Yaroslavtsev S.O.

Clinical, genealogical and psychogenic factors in the genesis of recurrent depression

Nadrage A.B., Khomyn O.Ya., Dybas I.V., Dasho M.B.

Blood and liquor cytokines as differential-diagnostic markers of acute meningitis in children

Nevoit G.V., Potiazhenko M.M., Mintser O.P.

Systemic dependences of changes in body composition with the progression of non-communicable diseases

Nezgoda I.I., Havryliuk A.O., Onofriichuk O.S., Demchyshyn Y.M., Haborets Y.V., Rosha L.G., Poprotska S.M.

Clinical-morphological features of liver changes in children with mono- and mixed-associated types of infectious mononucleosis

Onischenko O.B., Korolkov O.I., Ksonz I.V., Karpinskiy M.Yu., Yaresko O.V.

Оцінка прихильності до лікування хворих, що перебувають на нирково-замісній терапії з урахуванням наявності цукрового діабету 2-го типу

77 **Кир'ян О.А., Деркач І.А., Дорофєєв А.Е., Руденко М.М.**

Зміни кишкової мікробіоти у пацієнтів із неспецифічним виразковим колітом та синдромом подразненого кишечника і сечокам'яною хворобою

82 **Кочуєва М.М., Псарьова В.Г., Тимченко Г.А., Комісарова О.С., Марченко А.В., Тимченко М.Є., Заїкіна Ю.О.**

Клініко-лабораторні особливості хворих з коморбідністю бронхіальної астми та ожиріння

87 **Левенець С.С., Горобець Н.М., Кіржнер Г.Д., Сабадаш В.Є.**

Мікрофлора кишківника у дітей з дитячою колькою

91 **Лешій Н.П., Пахомова Н.Г., Баранець І.В., Кульбіда С.В., Яновська Т.А., Шеремет М.К., Супрун М.О.**

Особливості фізичного та психоемоційного стану дітей зі складними порушеннями розвитку

97 **Локес К.П., Личман В.О., Стебловський Д.В., Бондаренко В.В., Аветіков Д.С.**

Динаміка змін вмісту С-реактивного білку в сироватці крові пацієнтів із флегмонами щелепно-лицевої локалізації на різні терміни лікування

101 **Лоскутов А.Л., Лоскутова І.В.**

Стан вродженого імунітету при остеоартрозі в коморбідності з неалкогольним стеатогепатитом у хворих на хелікобактеріоз

106 **Магеррамов П.М.**

Частота і чинники ризику ускладнень оперативного лікування хвороб рогівки

111 **Макєєв В.Ф., Телішевська О.Д., Михайлович М.Ю.**

Роль та значення анамнезу в диференційній діагностиці скронево-нижньощелепних розладів

116 **Маньковський Д.С.**

Персоніфікація ризику гіпоксично-ішемічних уражень головного мозку в системі неврологічного супроводу кардіохірургічних пацієнтів

121 **Марута Н.О., Колядко С.П., Федченко В.Ю., Панько Т.В., Череднякова О.С., Ярославцев С.О.**

Клініко-генеалогічні та психогенні чинники у генезі рекурентних депресій

127 **Надрага О.Б., Хомин О.Я., Дибас І.В., Дашо М.Б.**

Цитокіни крові й ліквору як диференціально-діагностичні маркери гострих менінгітів у дітей

132 **Невойт Г.В., Потяженко М.М., Мінцер О.П.**

Системні залежності змін складу тіла при прогресуванні неінфекційних захворювань

137 **Незгода І.І., Гаврилюк А.О., Онофрійчук О.С., Демчишин Я.М., Габорець Я.В., Роша Л.Г., Попроцька С.М.**

Клініко-морфологічні особливості змін печінки у дітей із моно- та мікст-асоційованим варіантом інфекційного мононуклеозу

142 **Оніщенко О.В., Корольков О.І., Ксьонз І.В., Карпінський М.Ю., Яресько О.В.**

5. Ghimire S, Banks C, Castelino RL, Jose MD, Zaidi STR. Medication adherence assessment practices in dialysis settings: A survey of renal nurses' perceptions. *Journal of clinical nursing*. 2019 Feb; 28(3-4): 528–537.
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CHANGES IN THE INTESTINAL MICROBIOTA IN PATIENTS WITH ULCERATIVE COLITIS AND IRRITABLE BOWEL SYNDROME COMBINED WITH UROLITHIASIS

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The paper is devoted to the study of changes in the intestinal microbiome in patients with urolithiasis that occurred against the background of ulcerative colitis and irritable bowel syndrome. It was found that about 20 % of patients with urolithiasis have symptoms of irritable bowel syndrome, with more than half of the stones consisting of oxalates. In the study of fecal microflora in patients with the method of sequencing of the 16S gene of ribosomal RNA, compared with healthy, a significant decrease in Firmicutes, Faecalibacterium prausnitzii, Akkermansia muciniphila and the Firmicutes/Bacteroidetes ratio was revealed. The detected changes in the microflora can be associated both with direct changes in the intestine, inherent in nonspecific ulcerative colitis and irritable bowel syndrome, and with more frequent use of uroseptics/antibiotics in this category of patients.

Key words: urolithiasis, fecal microflora, phylotypes, intestinal diseases

О.А. Кир'ян, І.А. Деркач, А.Е. Дорофеев, М.М. Руденко ЗМІНИ КИШКОВОЇ МІКРОБІОТИ У ПАЦІЄНТІВ ІЗ НЕСПЕЦИФІЧНИМ ВИРАЗКОВИМ КОЛІТОМ ТА СИНДРОМОМ ПОДРАЗНЕНОГО КИШЕЧНИКА І СЕЧОКАМ'ЯНОЮ ХВОРОБОЮ

Робота присвячена вивченню змін кишкового мікробіому у пацієнтів із сечокам'яною хворобою, що виникла на тлі неспецифічного виразкового коліту та синдрому подразненого кишечника. Виявлено, що близько 20 % хворих із сечокам'яною хворобою мають симптоми синдрому подразненого кишечника, причому більше половини каменів склалися з оксалатів. При вивченні фекальної мікрофлори у хворих методом секвенування гена 16S рибосомальної РНК, порівнюючи із здоровими, виявлено достовірне зменшення Firmicutes, Faecalibacterium prausnitzii, Akkermansia muciniphila і співвідношення Firmicutes/Bacteroidetes. Виявлені зміни мікрофлори можуть бути пов'язані як з безпосередніми змінами в кишці, властивими неспецифічному виразковому коліту і синдрому подразненого кишечника, так і з більш частим використанням уросептиків/антибіотиків у даній категорії хворих.

Ключові слова: уролітіаз, фекальна мікрофлора, філотипи, захворювання кишечника

The work is a fragment of the research project "Features of the course, prognosis and treatment of comorbid conditions in diseases of internal organs, taking into account genetic, age and gender aspects", state registration No. 0118U004461

Intestinal microbiota changes are one of the leading links in the pathogenesis of both inflammatory and functional intestinal diseases. The intestinal microbiome has a direct effect on the development of inflammation, disruption of the permeability of the intestinal mucosal barrier and, as a consequence, the appearance of extraintestinal manifestations and complications. In addition, the combined pathology of internal organs and systems largely depends on the condition and permeability of the intestinal mucosal

barrier. Therefore, changes in the microbiome of the colon are now considered as a trigger factor in the development and progression of many diseases [1].

Today, almost 15 % of the world's adult population has kidney stones – kidney stone disease (KSD). In addition, urolithiasis has tended to increase over the past 50 years. During this period, the number of patients with KSD increased fourfold [4]. Ukraine is also no exception. The annual incidence of KSD is about 60 thousand people. It is well known that urolithiasis is a polyetiological disease that depends on climatic conditions, age, sex, genetic predisposition, diet, infections, as well as the presence of comorbidities (diabetes, obesity, hypertension). Moreover, the chemical composition of stones depends on a combination of risk factors [3, 4].

Inflammatory and functional diseases of the intestine are among the risk factors for KSD, which can have a significant impact [1]. According to our data and those of other authors [2, 6], the post-infectious irritable bowel syndrome (PI-IBS) is combined with KSD in more than 40 % of cases. In ulcerative colitis (UC), very often such kidney damage as KSD is considered as extraintestinal manifestations of the primary disease [1]. *Oxalobacter formigenes*, which is able to destroy oxalates in the intestinal lumen and reduce their absorption, was one of the first microorganisms found to reduce the risk of KSD developing [5, 9]. However, further studies have not confirmed the leading importance of this bacterium in the pathogenesis and treatment of urolithiasis [8, 11]. Therefore, more attention is currently paid to the study of changes in the number of other representatives of the intestinal microbiota. An increase in *Bacteroides* with a decrease in *Prevotella*, *Enterobacter*, *Dorea*, *Faecalibacterium*, *Lactobacillus*, *Akkermansia muciniphila*, *Faecalibacterium prausnitzii* was found in patients with KSD. That is, there is a decrease in microorganisms capable of destroying oxalates and an increase in those that cause inflammation [5, 7, 9, 11].

If the treatment of clinically manifest KSD is primarily minimally invasive urological interventions, then the problem of recurrence prevention requires further development and differentiated approach [10, 12] to the management of such patients.

The purpose of the study was to establish disorders of the gut microflora in patients with ulcerative colitis and irritable bowel syndrome with concomitant urolithiasis.

Methods and materials. To achieve this purpose, we surveyed and analyzed more than 9,000 patients with KSD, who were treated in inpatient departments of Poltava, Kyiv and Lviv regions. Of these, more than 2,000 patients had intestinal pathology. 1,951 patients showed symptoms of irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) of various subtypes, and 112 were diagnosed with UC. Patients were initially admitted to the Department with attacks of renal colic. Different approaches were used to treat urolithiasis depending on the localization of calculi. If calculi were detected in the kidney and/or upper third of the ureter, percutaneous nephrolithotripsy with antegrade ureterolithotripsy was used, and if localized in its middle or lower third, retrograde contact ureterolithotripsy or ureterolithoextraction was used. The chemical composition of urinary stones was spectrophotometrically studied in all patients. A combination of KSD and IBS was found in 1,053 (53.9 %) patients and oxalate stones were found in 72 (64.3 %) patients with UC. We selected 116 patients with unilateral single oxalate stones in combination with IBS and 70 patients with UC and KSD for further in-depth microbiological examination. In addition, in 50 patients with UC and 60 patients with IBS without urolithiasis, a colon microbiome was examined. Polymerase chain reaction studies were performed to determine the main types of fecal microbiota. 40 healthy representatives of the Ukrainian population were examined as a control group for assessing the intestinal microbiota.

The chemical composition of the removed stones was studied on the UR-20 device (Carl Zeiss, Jena, Germany) in the KBr Matrix (potassium, bromide) in the frequency range 4000-400 cm^{-1} by determining the number, position and intensity of absorption bands in the infrared spectra of the studied samples. Quantitative determination of different fecal bacterial taxa was performed by qPCR using primers targeting the 16S rRNA gene specific for Firmicutes, Actinobacteria, Bacteroidetes, *Akkermansia muciniphila* and *Faecalibacterium prausnitzii*, as well as universal primers. The quantity and quality of DNA was measured by NanoDrop ND-8000 (Thermo Scientific, USA). Samples of fresh faeces of each patient were placed in a special container. Within 10 minutes after defecation, an aliquot of faeces was taken, which was immediately frozen and stored at -20 °C until DNA isolation by the phenol-chloroform method according to the protocol. DNA was eluted in 200 μl elution buffer. Genotyping was performed by polymerase chain reaction using the primer structure and temperature cycle parameters. Statistical analysis was performed using Office Excel 2016 (Microsoft Corporation, USA), using analytical programs, t – Student's criteria, (probability value $p < 0.05$).

The results of the study and their discussion. According to the obtained data, women predominated among the examined patients, which is more typical for patients with irritable bowel syndrome, than for patients with urolithiasis (table 1).

Table 1

Characteristics of the examined patients with IBS and UC + urolithiasis

	IBS and KSD		UC and KSD	
	N=116	%	N=70	%
M/F	45/71	39/61	31/39	44/56
Age (years)	45.2	±2.9	49.8	±2.7
Oxalate stones	61	52.6	46	65.7
Phosphate Oxalate stones	55	47.4	24	34.3
Percutaneous nephrolithotripsy + antegrade ureterolithotripsy	68	58.6	45	64.3
Retrograde ureterolithotripsy/ureterolithoextraction	48	41.4	25	35.7

Thus, in the group of patients with IBS and KSD, the disease was detected in women in 61 % of cases (men – 39 % of cases), in the group of UC and KSD – in 56 % of cases (men – 44 %, respectively). The age groups of the examined patients were comparable. The average age of patients in both study groups did not have a significant difference and was 45.2±2.9 years in patients with different subtypes of IBS and KSD, 49.8±2.7 years in the group of patients with UC and KSD ($p>0.05$). According to the chemical composition, both oxalate and mixed oxalate-phosphate stones were detected in patients with IBS with the same frequency. According to the data obtained in patients with IBS, oxalate stones were found in 61 (52.6 %) patients, and oxalate-phosphate – in 55 (47.4 %) patients. In contrast to patients with ulcerative colitis, who had oxalate stones in two-thirds of cases – 46 (65.7 %) patients and only a third – oxalate-phosphate stones – 24 (34.3 %) patients. More frequent formation of oxalate stones in patients with UC may be associated with more pronounced changes in the content of intestinal microbiota phylotypes, due to the effect on the permeability of the intestinal mucosal barrier and its reparative properties, which requires further study. Among the methods of treating stones, percutaneous nephrolithotripsy was more often used, which was associated with a large number of patients with concretions in the kidneys and upper third of the urinary tract.

Phylotypes of the gut microbiota are essential for the normal functioning of the human body. The appearance of imbalances and differences in the composition and ratio of the main phylotypes of the gut microflora can play a key role in the occurrence of diseases, including KSD. In-depth study of changes in the intestinal microbiota will allow to identify the mechanisms of development of various pathological conditions and prescribe appropriate therapy. To study the features of disorders of changes in the intestinal microflora and identify the relationship with the possible impact on the increased risk of urolithiasis in patients with irritable bowel syndrome and ulcerative colitis with urolithiasis, a study of the main phylotypes of the fecal microbiota was performed. When studying the percentage of phylotypes of fecal microorganisms in patients with combined pathology, the following features were found (table 2).

Table 2

Phylotypes of fecal microorganisms in patients with UC and IBS combined with KSD

Type of bacteria	Healthy people (n=40)	UC without KSD (n=50)	UC + KSD (n=70)	IBS without KSD (n=60)	IBS + KSD (n=116)
<i>Firmicutes</i>	37.2	26,1*	24,2*	32.1	28,8 *
<i>Faecalibacterium prausnitzii</i>	8.4	5,2*	2,9*●	7.7	4,1 *●
<i>Bacteroidetes</i>	40.5	37.2	35,9*	40.8	43.8
<i>Actinobacteria</i>	13.7	30,5*	29,1*	19.9	19,5 *
<i>Akkermansia muciniphila</i>	1.9	2.0	2.1	1.5	1,2 *
<i>Others</i>	6.7	6.2	10,8*●	7.2	7.9

Note: * – significant differences compared to the group of healthy individuals $p<0.05$ ● significant differences when comparing a group of patients with the presence and absence of KSD $p<0.05$

According to the data obtained, significant changes in the intestinal microbiome were found in patients with UC, regardless of the presence of urolithiasis. At the same time, in patients with intestinal pathology and KSD, these disorders were more significant, especially in patients in the group with ulcerative colitis. Thus, when analyzing the percentage of the main phylotypes of intestinal microflora

in patients with UC, a significant decrease in Firmicutes was noted – 26.1 % in patients without KSD and more pronounced with urolithiasis – 24.2 % (37.2 % – in healthy individuals) and Bacteroidetes – 37.2 % in the absence of KSD and reliably with urolithiasis detection – 35.9 % (40.5 % – healthy individuals), against the background of Actinobacteria growth in both groups with UC (13.7 % – control group of healthy individuals) ($p < 0.05$). At the same time, in patients with isolated UC, the percentage of other representatives of the intestinal microflora, mainly Proteobacteria, was within the normal range – 6.2 % (6.7 % in healthy people). In patients with UC + KSD, these bacteria were significantly increased – 10.8 % of the fecal microflora content. In addition, patients with UC and KSD showed a significant decrease in one of the main representatives of the butyrate-producing regulatory flora, gram-positive anaerobic bacterium *Faecalibacterium prausnitzii*. Thus, in the group of patients with non-specific ulcerative colitis, who did not have KSD, this phylotype was detected in 5.2 % of the intestinal microflora. When urolithiasis was detected, the frequency of detection of *Faecalibacterium prausnitzii* significantly decreased, up to 2.9 % of the intestinal microflora content, compared with healthy people and patients with UC without urolithiasis ($p < 0.05$). This phenomenon can be considered as an additional burden on the intestinal mucosal barrier with a decrease in its reparative properties and an increase in the permeability of the mucous membrane of the colon. When analyzing the data obtained in the percentage of the *Akkermansia muciniphila* phylotype, which regulates the permeability of the intestinal mucosal barrier and can modulate the immune response of patients with UC both with urolithiasis and without KSD in comparison with healthy individuals, no significant difference was determined.

When analyzing data on the content of phylotypes in the intestinal microbiota of patients with different subtypes of IBS who did not have urolithiasis, comparing with a group of healthy individuals, no significant difference was found. Thus, the percentage of Firmicutes of intestinal microflora was 32.1 % (37.2 % in healthy individuals), Bacteroidetes was detected in 40.8 % of the microbiota content (40.5 % in healthy individuals), *Faecalibacterium prausnitzii* was detected in 7.7 % of the microbiota content in patients with IBS (8.4 % in healthy people). The content of phylotypes of Actinobacteria and *Akkermansia muciniphila* bacteria in patients with IBS without urolithiasis, as well as other intestinal microflora, also did not significantly differ from the group of healthy individuals ($p > 0.05$).

In comparison with practically healthy residents of Ukraine, patients with oxalate urolithiasis, which was formed against the background of IBS, have significant changes in the percentage of intestinal microflora. Patients with IBS and KSD showed a significant decrease in the content of Firmicutes – 28.8 % (37.2 % in healthy individuals) and such a representative as *Faecalibacterium prausnitzii* – 4.1 % (8.4 % healthy individuals), which also had a significant difference with the group of IBS patients without KSD – 7.7 %, which confirms the special role of this phylotype in the development of the disease. In addition, patients with irritable bowel syndrome and urolithiasis had significantly reduced levels of one of the most important protective microorganisms, the phylotype Verrucomicrobia – *Akkermansia muciniphila* – 1.2 % (1.9 % healthy individuals) and had the lowest rates, compared with all the studied groups and the ratio Firmicutes/Bacteroidetes. At the same time, a significant increase in the proportion of Actinobacteria and an insignificant increase in Bacteroidetes were observed. Phylotypes of other intestinal microflora in the group of patients with IBS and KSD were also determined more frequently, unreliably compared to the group of healthy individuals and IBS without urolithiasis ($p > 0.05$).

Consequently, patients with the most common functional and inflammatory bowel diseases, such as irritable bowel syndrome and ulcerative colitis, who had a combination of the disease with urolithiasis, show more pronounced changes in the intestinal microbiome, both in comparison with the healthy population and in comparison with patients with isolated IBS and UC. Detection of disorders in the content of the main phylotypes of commensal intestinal bacteria, such as *Faecalibacterium prausnitzii*, which is one of the main butyrate-producing bacteria, Firmicutes, *Akkermansia muciniphila*, the ratio of Firmicutes/Bacteroidetes in patients with IBS and UC and urolithiasis, allows to assume the similarity of the mechanisms of disease development and determines the further path in the diagnostic search and therapeutic correction of the detected abnormalities.

Discussion. According to our study, almost 20 % of Ukrainian patients with KSD have symptoms of IBS, which is twice as common as in people without urolithiasis, and more than half of the stones consisted of oxalates. This is due to common pathogenetic mechanisms [1, 6]. UC with KSD was less common, but it should be noted that the prevalence of non-specific ulcerative colitis is 10-12 times lower than that of IBS. The examined patients with IBS and UC were more likely to complain of diarrhea, which can lead to dehydration and changes in urine volume and pH. Another reason for stone formation in

intestinal pathology can be an altered intestinal microbiota. When studying the fecal microflora by sequencing the 16S ribosomal RNA gene, we found changes in the ratio of the main phylotypes of microorganisms.

Compared to healthy patients, the group of patients showed a significant decrease in Firmicutes, *Faecalibacterium prausnitzii*, *Akkermansia muciniphila* and the Firmicutes/Bacteroidetes ratio. These microorganisms have a protective effect on the intestine, are able to normalize the metabolic processes of the macroorganism and reduce the level of oxalates [5, 7]. In addition, microbiome changes were more intense in patients with UC and IBS in whom KSD was formed. The revealed deviations in the content of colon microflora in patients with a combination of intestinal pathology and ICD can be associated with both direct changes in the intestine, characteristic of UC and IBS, and with more frequent use of uroseptics/antibiotics in this category of patients [13]. Exposure to the intestinal microbiome with the use of drugs and diet can be a promising method of treatment and prevention of urolithiasis.

Conclusions

1. Symptoms of IBS were detected in 21.7 % patients with KSD and UC - in 1.2 % of cases.
2. Patients with UC and IBS have pronounced changes in the fecal microbiota, which were more significant in patients with KSD combination.
3. In the fecal microbiota of these patients, the amount of Actinobacteria is significantly increased and the content of Firmicutes, *Faecalibacterium prausnitzii*, *Akkermansia muciniphila* is reduced, which may reduce the destruction of oxalates and increase the risk of KSD.

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