



A Rare Case of a Bleeding Gastrointestinal Stromal Tumor (GIST) Masquerading as a Benign Polyp: Emergency Surgical Management

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ABSTRACT

Gastrointestinal stromal tumors (GISTs) are the most common mesenchymal neoplasms of the digestive tract. While they can present with hemorrhage, their initial misdiagnosis as a benign entity followed by life-threatening bleeding requiring emergency surgery is a rare and challenging scenario

A 63-year-old male presented with hemorrhagic shock due to melena. The patient had a history of recurrent GI bleeding with initial biopsies suggesting an inflammatory fibroid polyp. The alleged inflammatory fibroid polyp was known over the last 6 years and the patient suffered previously of mild upper GI bleeding episodes, before admission for the current emergency condition.

Subsequent evaluation including CT scans and endoscopic ultrasounds eventually confirmed a high-grade gastric GIST (8.4 cm Ki-67:37%).

This case illustrates several critical points: The potential misdiagnosis of GISTs as benign polyps the natural history of such tumors presenting with recurrent hemorrhage over the years the necessity of emergency surgery despite available targeted therapies

The decision of emergency gastrectomy was driven by life-threatening hemorrhage overriding the standard approach of neoadjuvant therapy for large GISTs

This case underscores that bleeding GISTs may be misdiagnosed initially, leading to delayed treatment. In acute hemorrhage, emergency surgery remains a vital life-saving intervention. Multidisciplinary evaluation and histological reassessment are crucial for optimal management of such complicated cases.

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INTRODUCTION

Gastrointestinal stromal tumors (GISTs) are the most common mesenchymal neoplasms of the digestive tract. While they can present with hemorrhage, their initial misdiagnosis as a benign entity followed by life-threatening bleeding requiring emergency surgery is a rare and challenging scenario

METHODS

A 63-year-old male presented with hemorrhagic shock due to melena. The patient had a history of recurrent GI bleeding with initial biopsies suggesting an inflammatory fibroid polyp. The alleged inflammatory fibroid polyp was known over the last 6 years and the patient suffered previously of mild upper GI bleeding episodes, before admission for the current emergency condition.

Subsequent evaluation including CT scans and endoscopic ultrasounds eventually confirmed a high-grade gastric GIST (8.4 cm Ki-67:37%).

TREATMENT

The patient was hospitalized in our clinic and was transfused with a total of 3 RBC units. The melena stopped and the hematocrit stabilized. After 5 days he was admitted for an emergency total gastrectomy.



RESULTS

The postoperative course was uncomplicated and the patients got discharged after 16 days at the hospital.

In September 2025 the patient referred to multidisciplinary team which suggested the start of targeted therapy using oral tyrosine kinase inhibitors (TKIs) imatinib



DISCUSSION

This case illustrates several critical points:

- The potential misdiagnosis of GISTs as benign polyps
- the natural history of such tumors presenting with recurrent hemorrhage over the years
- the necessity of emergency surgery despite available targeted therapies

The decision of emergency gastrectomy was driven by life-threatening hemorrhage overriding the standard approach of neoadjuvant therapy for large GISTs.

CONCLUSIONS

This case underscores that bleeding GISTs may be misdiagnosed initially, leading to delayed treatment. In acute hemorrhage, **emergency surgery** remains a vital life-saving intervention. Multidisciplinary evaluation and histological reassessment are crucial for optimal management of such complicated cases.

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