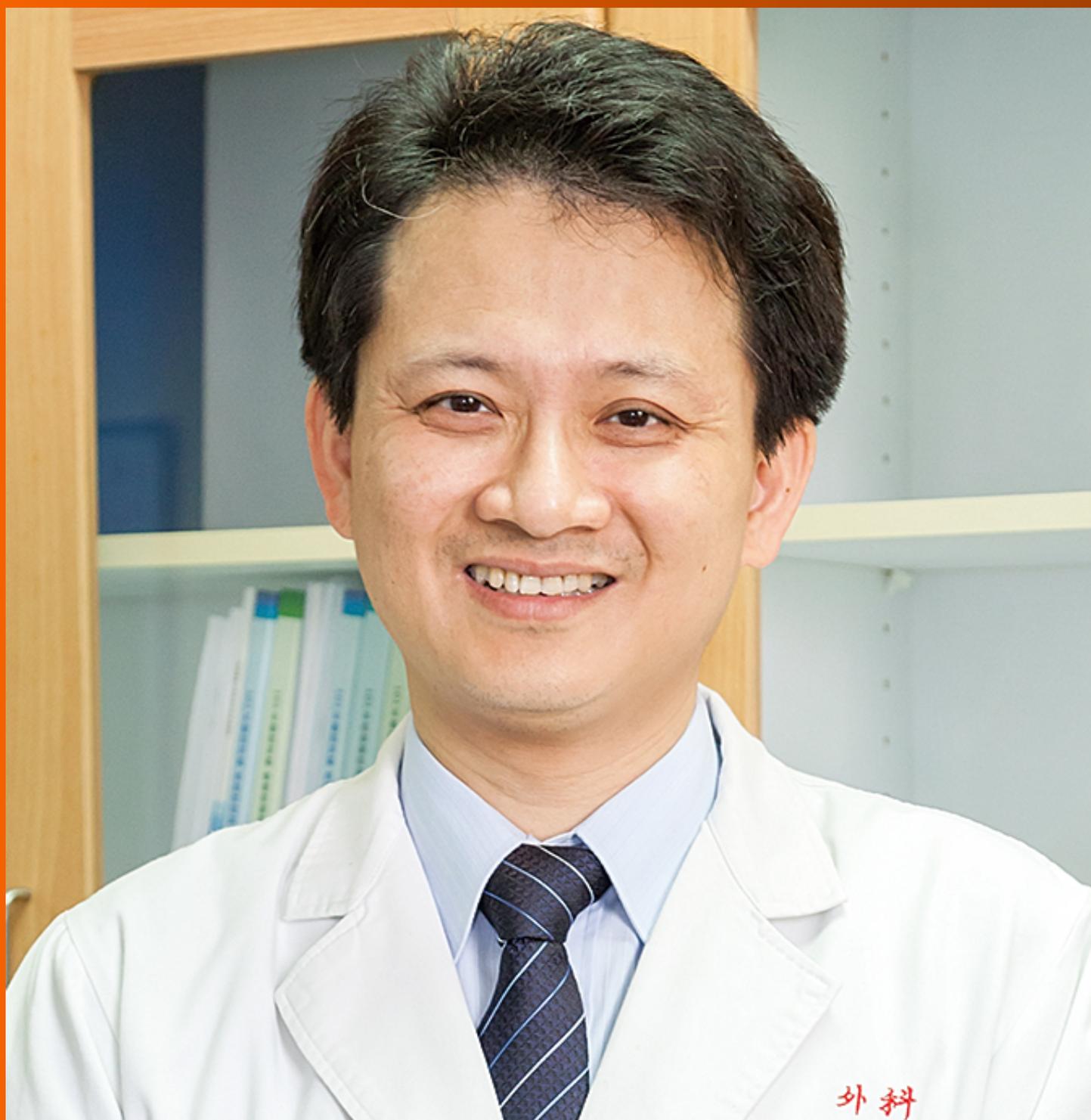


# World Journal of *Clinical Cases*

*World J Clin Cases* 2023 May 16; 11(14): 3114-3368



**OPINION REVIEW**

- 3114 Modernising autism spectrum disorder model engineering and treatment *via* CRISPR-Cas9: A gene reprogramming approach  
*Sandhu A, Kumar A, Rawat K, Gautam V, Sharma A, Saha L*

**REVIEW**

- 3128 Burden of disability in type 2 diabetes mellitus and the moderating effects of physical activity  
*Oyewole OO, Ale AO, Ogunlana MO, Gurayah T*

**MINIREVIEWS**

- 3140 Postoperative hypoxemia for patients undergoing Stanford type A aortic dissection  
*Liu HY, Zhang SP, Zhang CX, Gao QY, Liu YY, Ge SL*

**ORIGINAL ARTICLE****Case Control Study**

- 3148 Impact of extended nursing model after multi-disciplinary treatment on young patient with post-stroke  
*Xu XY, Pang ZJ, Li MH, Wang K, Song J, Cao Y, Fang M*
- 3158 Changes and significance of serum ubiquitin carboxyl-terminal hydrolase L1 and glial fibrillary acidic protein in patients with glioma  
*Zhu QH, Wu JK, Hou GL*

**Retrospective Study**

- 3167 Multitrack and multianchor point screw technique combined with the Wiltse approach for lesion debridement for lumbar tuberculosis  
*Yuan YF, Ren ZX, Zhang C, Li GJ, Liu BZ, Li XD, Miao J, Li JF*
- 3176 Clinical features and prognostic factors in 49 patients with follicular lymphoma at a single center: A retrospective analysis  
*Wu H, Sun HC, Ouyang GF*
- 3187 Value of optical coherence tomography measurement of macular thickness and optic disc parameters for glaucoma screening in patients with high myopia  
*Mu H, Li RS, Yin Z, Feng ZL*

**Observational Study**

- 3195 Comparative study of the clinical efficacy of all-inside and traditional techniques in anterior cruciate ligament reconstruction  
*An BJ, Wang YT, Zhao Z, Wang MX, Xing GY*

- 3204** Positioning and design by computed tomography imaging in neuroendoscopic surgery of patients with chronic subdural hematoma

*Wang XJ, Yin YH, Zhang LY, Wang ZF, Sun C, Cui ZM*

- 3211** Evaluation of chronic idiopathic tinnitus and its psychosocial triggers

*Hamed SA, Attiah FA, Fawzy M, Azzam M*

- 3224** Intestinal complications in patients with Crohn's disease in the Brazilian public healthcare system between 2011 and 2020

*Sasaki LY, Martins AL, Galhardi-Gasparini R, Saad-Hossne R, Ritter AMV, Barreto TB, Marcolino T, Balula B, Yang-Santos C*

### Randomized Controlled Trial

- 3238** Effect of non-pharmacological treatment on the full recovery of social functioning in patients with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder

*Lv YB, Cheng W, Wang MH, Wang XM, Hu YL, Lv LQ*

### CASE REPORT

- 3248** Diagnosis of tuberculous uveitis by the macrogenome of intraocular fluid: A case report and review of the literature

*Zhang YK, Guan Y, Zhao J, Wang LF*

- 3256** Intragastric fish bones migrate into the liver: A case report

*Dai MG, Zheng JJ, Yang J, Ye B*

- 3261** Primary seminal vesicle adenocarcinoma with a history of seminal vesicle cyst: A case report and review of literature

*Yao Y, Liu S, He YL, Luo L, Zhang GM*

- 3267** Immune checkpoint inhibitor therapy-induced autoimmune polyendocrine syndrome type II and Crohn's disease: A case report

*Gao MJ, Xu Y, Wang WB*

- 3275** Late-onset mitochondrial encephalomyopathy with lactic acidosis and stroke-like episodes syndrome with mitochondrial DNA 3243A>G mutation masquerading as autoimmune encephalitis: A case report

*Wang JW, Yuan XB, Chen HF*

- 3282** Metastatic gastric cancer from breast carcinoma presenting with paraneoplastic rheumatic syndrome: A case report

*Rech MB, da-Cruz ER, Salgado K, Balbinot RA, Balbinot SS, Soldera J*

- 3288** Novel mutation of SPG4 gene in a Chinese family with hereditary spastic paraplegia: A case report

*Wang J, Bu WT, Zhu MJ, Tang JY, Liu XM*

- 3295** Chronic pulmonary mucormycosis caused by rhizopus microsporus mimics lung carcinoma in an immunocompetent adult: A case report

*Guo XZ, Gong LH, Wang WX, Yang DS, Zhang BH, Zhou ZT, Yu XH*

- 3304** Idiopathic sclerosing mesenteritis presenting with small bowel volvulus in a patient with antiphospholipid syndrome: A case report  
*Chennavasin P, Gururatsakul M*
- 3311** *Neisseria mucosa* - A rare cause of peritoneal dialysis-related peritonitis: A case report  
*Ren JM, Zhang XY, Liu SY*
- 3317** Rectal prolapse in a 30-year-old bladder stone male patient: A case report  
*Ding HX, Huang JG, Feng C, Tai SC*
- 3323** Successful treatment of veno-arterial extracorporeal membrane oxygenation complicated with left ventricular thrombus by intravenous thrombolysis: A case report  
*Wang YD, Lin JF, Huang XY, Han XD*
- 3330** Successful remimazolam sedation-epidural block in an older patient with severe chronic obstructive pulmonary disease: A case report  
*Yu JJ, Pei HS, Meng Y*
- 3340** *De novo* mutation of NAXE (APOA1BP)-related early-onset progressive encephalopathy with brain edema and/or leukoencephalopathy-1: A case report  
*Ding L, Huang TT, Ying GH, Wang SY, Xu HF, Qian H, Rahman F, Lu XP, Guo H, Zheng G, Zhang G*
- 3351** Iatrogenic atlantoaxial rotatory subluxation after thyroidectomy in a pediatric patient: A case report  
*Hong WJ, Lee JK, Hong JH, Han MS, Lee SS*
- 3356** Bladder metastasis from epidermal growth factor receptor mutant lung cancer: A case report  
*Jin CB, Yang L*
- 3362** Primary rectal mucosa-associated lymphoid tissue lymphoma treated with only endoscopic submucosal dissection: A case report  
*Lee WS, Noh MG, Joo YE*

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# Primary rectal mucosa-associated lymphoid tissue lymphoma treated with only endoscopic submucosal dissection: A case report

Wan-Sik Lee, Myung-Giun Noh, Young-Eun Joo

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## Abstract

### BACKGROUND

Mucosa-associated lymphoid tissue (MALT) lymphoma is a distinct subtype of non-Hodgkin B cell lymphoma that mostly involves the gastrointestinal tract. The stomach is the most commonly affected site whereas colorectal involvement occurs very rarely. Given its rarity, the management and clinical outcome of colorectal MALT lymphoma are not well established yet.

### CASE SUMMARY

From the superficial capillary bed in the lower rectum. Endoscopic ultrasonography showed homogenous hypoechoic lesions in the deep mucosal layer. Endoscopic submucosal dissection (ESD) was done for accurate histologic diagnosis and treatment and both the rectal lesions were completely removed *en bloc* and subsequently diagnosed as primary rectal MALT lymphoma. Herein, we report a case of primary rectal MALT lymphoma in a 68-year-old woman that was treated by only ESD, and the 12-month follow-up revealed no tumour recurrence.

### CONCLUSION

These results of our case and previous reports suggest that endoscopic resection alone may be a feasible and safe treatment for primary colorectal MALT lymphoma and allows organ preservation.

**Key Words:** Rectum; Mucosa-associated lymphoid tissue lymphoma; Endoscopic submucosal dissection

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**Core Tip:** Colorectal involvement of Mucosa-associated lymphoid tissue (MALT) lymphoma occurs rarely and the management of colorectal MALT lymphoma are not well established yet. We report a rare case of colorectal MALT lymphoma treated with endoscopic resection alone. To date, only six cases of primary colorectal MALT lymphomas treated with endoscopic resection alone, including our patient, have been documented in the medical literature. Among the reported cases, there was no recurrence during follow-up. These results of our case and previous reports suggest that endoscopic resection alone may be a feasible and safe treatment for primary colorectal MALT lymphoma and allows organ preservation.

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## INTRODUCTION

Gastrointestinal lymphoma is an uncommon disease that constitutes a small proportion of gastrointestinal neoplasms. Primary gastrointestinal mucosa-associated lymphoid tissue (MALT) lymphoma is a rare type of non-Hodgkin lymphoma that comprises 1%-4% of gastrointestinal non-Hodgkin lymphomas[1-3]. Most primary gastrointestinal MALT lymphomas occur in the stomach, and colorectal involvement occurs very rarely. Thus, the management and clinical outcome of colorectal MALT lymphoma are highly variable and not well established[4-7].

Here, we report a case of a 68-year-old woman with primary rectal MALT lymphoma that was treated with endoscopic submucosal dissection (ESD) alone and present a literature review pertaining to this condition.

## CASE PRESENTATION

### Chief complaints

A 68-year-old woman visited our clinic for a routine health screening examination.

### History of present illness

She had no systemic B symptoms, including abdominal pain, fever, night sweats, and weight loss.

### History of past illness

Ten years earlier, she underwent surgery for thyroid cancer. She had been on medication for hypertension and diabetes mellitus for 15 years.

### Personal and family history

The patient denied any family history of malignant tumours.

### Physical examination

On physical examination, she was afebrile, her blood pressure and pulse were normal, and her abdomen was soft, nondistended, and nontender without hepatosplenomegaly or palpable lymphadenopathy.

### Laboratory examinations

Laboratory examinations, including complete blood cell count, liver function test, renal function study, and tumour markers, were within normal limits.

### Imaging examinations

Computed tomography scan of the neck, chest, abdomen, and pelvis as well as bone marrow aspiration revealed no significant abnormalities.

## FURTHER DIAGNOSTIC WORK-UP

Esophagogastroduodenoscopy showed atrophic gastritis with intestinal metaplasia, and the *Campylobacter*-like organism test was negative for *Helicobacter pylori* (*H. pylori*) infection and the patient

didn't have history of previous *H. pylori* eradication therapy. Colonoscopy showed two subepithelial tumours, measuring 4 and 5 mm and arising from the superficial capillary bed into the lower rectum (Figure 1), that seemed to be neuroendocrine tumours. Endoscopic ultrasonography revealed two homogenous hypoechoic lesions in the deep mucosal layer (Figure 2). As rectal neuroendocrine tumor was suspected according to the endoscopic ultrasonography, the two rectal lesions were removed *en bloc* via ESD for accurate histological diagnosis and treatment (Figure 3).

---

## FINAL DIAGNOSIS

On routine histology, haematoxylin-eosin staining showed a dense aggregate of lymphoid cell in the lamina propria layer forming polypoid-lesion (Figure 4A). These lymphoid cells that had small-to-intermediate nuclei and focally clear cytoplasm, infiltrated into muscularis mucosae but did not infiltrate into submucosa (Figure 4B). Immunohistochemistry to ascertain the nature of tumour cells showed positive staining for CD20 (Figure 4C), but negative results for CD3 and Bcl-6. The Ki-67 Labelling index was 5%. Characteristic lymphocyte-epithelial infiltration of CD20-positive tumor cells was also observed (Figure 4D). The biopsy specimens indicated a diagnosis of MALT lymphoma. In accordance with the Ann Arbor staging system, the tumour was diagnosed as a stage IE primary rectal MALT lymphoma.

---

## TREATMENT

The two rectal lesions were removed *en bloc* via ESD.

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## OUTCOME AND FOLLOW-UP

The patient has been followed-up regularly at the outpatient clinic. Although follow-up period of the patient has been only 12 mo, there was no evidence of recurrence at 12 mo after the ESD.

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## DISCUSSION

MALT lymphoma is classified as an extranodal marginal zone B-cell lymphoma of the MALT type[1-3] that frequently involves the gastrointestinal tract, including stomach and small bowel, and very rarely involves the colorectal structures[4-7]. Therefore, the clinical characteristics, treatment, and outcome of primary colorectal MALT lymphoma have not been clearly established yet.

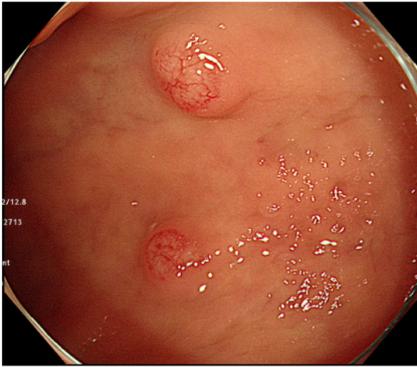
The median age at diagnosis of colorectal MALT lymphoma is approximately 60 years, with a slight female predisposition, and the clinical presentation is most often asymptomatic, followed by abdominal discomfort/pain, positive result on a stool occult blood test, constipation, diarrhoea, tenesmus, and obstruction. The most common lesion site is the rectum, followed by the terminal ileum, cecum, and sigmoid colon. The main endoscopic appearance is of a subepithelial tumour, followed by polyposis, ileitis, and epithelial mass type[7]. Our patient is a 68-year-old woman with an asymptomatic rectal MALT lymphoma that comprised two subepithelial tumours that were found incidentally on screening colonoscopy.

Gastric MALT lymphoma is strongly associated with *H. pylori* infection, and *H. pylori* eradication is the main therapeutic strategy in primary gastric MALT lymphoma[1-3]. However, the association between colorectal MALT lymphoma and *H. pylori* infection is unclear. In our patient, the rectal MALT lymphoma was not associated with an *H. pylori* infection.

Colorectal MALT lymphomas were treated by various modalities, including single or a combination of endoscopic resection, surgery, *H. pylori* eradication with antibiotics, radiation therapy, or chemotherapy. The overall prognosis of colonic MALT lymphoma showed an indolent nature and favourable clinical behaviour[4-7]. However, because of its rarity and indolent nature, the treatment and outcome of colorectal MALT lymphoma is not well established.

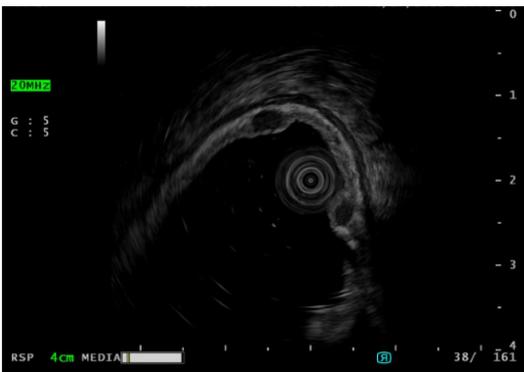
In our case, ESD was undertaken for accurate histological diagnosis and treatment. Rectal lesions were completely resected *en bloc* by ESD and were pathologically confirmed as a rectal MALT lymphoma. Given the stage IE status of lesions limited to only the rectum, based on a discussion with our multidisciplinary medical team, observation without additional treatment was planned. Twelve months after the ESD, the patient had no tumour recurrence.

The first case of endoscopic resection with a hot-snare guillotine technique was reported in primary rectal MALT lymphoma in 2009, wherein empirical *H. pylori* eradication therapy was added despite a negative result on the *H. pylori* test[8]. Another case of stage IE primary rectal MALT lymphoma was



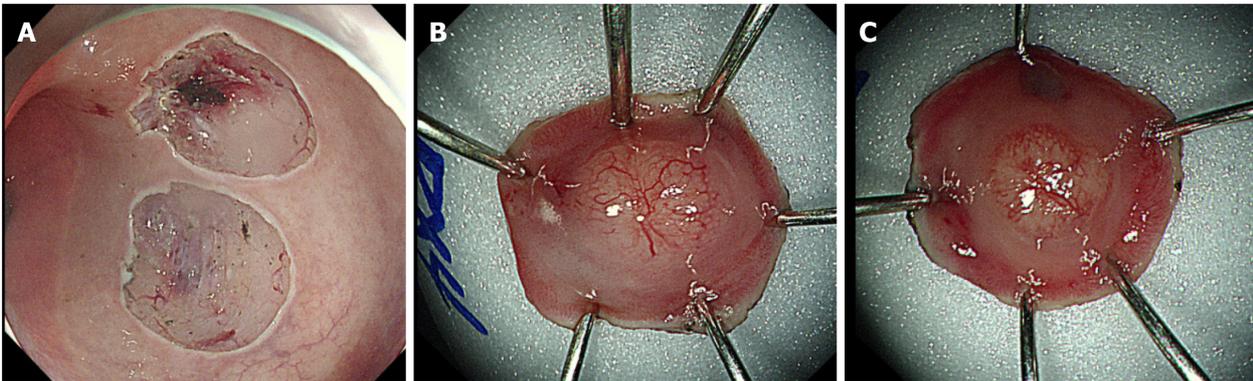
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Figure 1 Colonoscopy shows two subepithelial tumors, measuring 4 and 5 mm, within the superficial capillary bed and rising into the rectum.



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Figure 2 Endoscopic ultrasonogram shows two homogenous hypoechoic lesions in the deep mucosal layer.



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Figure 3 Two rectal lesions have been removed *en bloc* by endoscopic submucosal dissection. A: Two ESD induced ulcers; B: Tumor size was measured 5 mm × 4 mm and specimen size was measured 12 mm × 12 mm; C: Tumor size was measured 4 mm × 4 mm and specimen size was measured 12 mm × 10 mm.

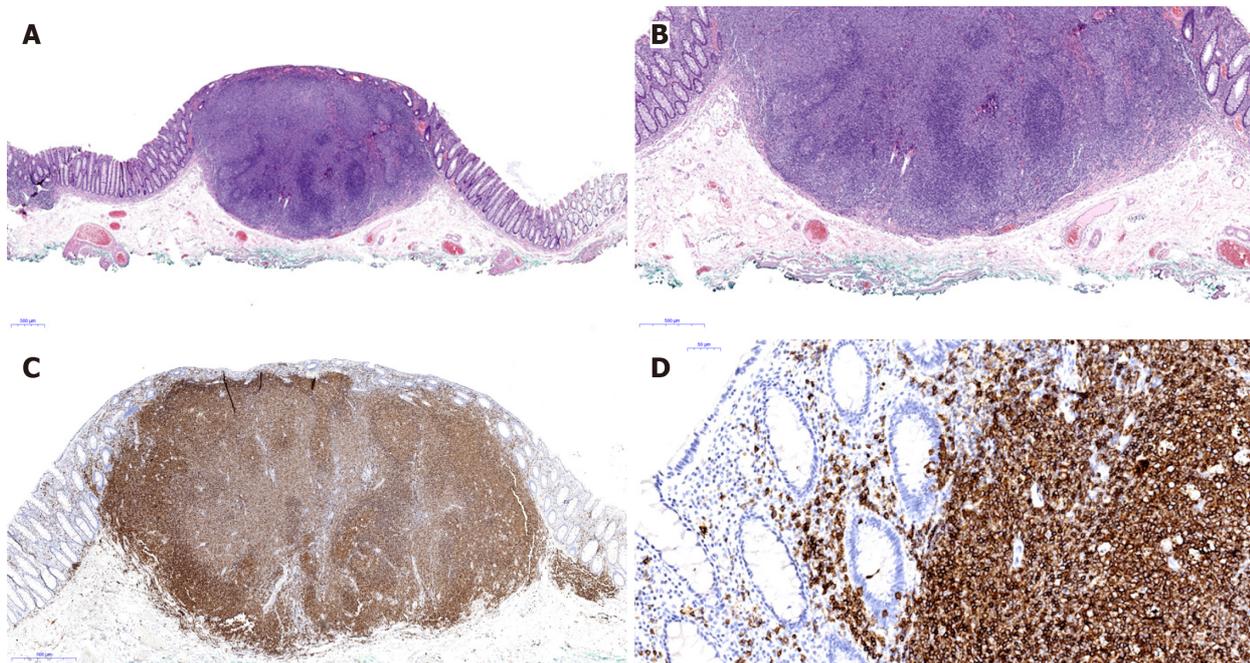
diagnosed by endoscopic mucosal resection (EMR) and treated with radiation therapy[9].

To date, only six cases of primary colorectal MALT lymphomas treated with endoscopic resection alone, including our patient, have been documented in the medical literature (Table 1)[10-14]. The patients were aged 46 to 72 years (mean age, 64.2 years) and included three men and three women. On clinical presentation, three cases were asymptomatic, two had bleeding, and one had weight loss. Two cases are treated with EMR, two with ESD, one with EMR with ligation, and one with endoscopic full-thickness resection. The mean follow-up period was 30.2 mo (range, 12-60 mo). Among the reported cases, there was no recurrence during follow-up.

**Table 1 Summary of reported cases of primary colorectal mucosa-associated lymphoid tissue lymphomas treated with endoscopic resection alone**

Patient No.	Ref.	Age (yr)/Sex	Symptoms (duration)	Location	Size (cm)	Endoscopic findings	Treatment	Follow up period (mo)	Outcome
1	Lin <i>et al</i> [10], 2016	59/M	Positive fecal occult blood test	Colon (25 cm from anal verge)	2.0	Polypoid lesion with wide base, slightly irregular border, and an irregular vascular pattern with mild inflammatory changes	EMR	36	No recurrence
2	Shah <i>et al</i> [11], 2021	72/M	Asymptomatic	Mid rectum	2.0	Raised erythematous lesion	EMR	60	No recurrence
3	Yoon <i>et al</i> [12], 2021	69/F	Weight loss (3 mo)	Lower rectum	1.0	Subepithelial tumor	EMR with ligation	37	No recurrence
4	Tao <i>et al</i> [13], 2022	46/M	Asymptomatic	Rectum (10 cm from anal verge)	3.5	Laterally spreading tumor-like lesion	ESD	24	No recurrence
5	Li <i>et al</i> [14], 2022	71/F	Hematochezia (1 mo)	Lower rectum	6.0	Hemispheric mass with rough and hyperemic mucosa	Endoscopic full-thickness resection	12	No recurrence
6	Present case	68/F	Asymptomatic	Lower rectum	0.5, 0.3	Two subepithelial tumors with superficial capillary bed	ESD	12	No recurrence

MALT: Mucosa-associated lymphoid tissue; EMR: Endoscopic mucosal resection; ESD: Endoscopic submucosal dissection.



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**Figure 4 Microscopic findings.** A: Endoscopic biopsy specimens show a dense aggregate of lymphoma cells in the lamina propria (hematoxylin and eosin staining, ×20); B: Lymphoma cells infiltrate the mucosal layer above the subepithelial layer (hematoxylin and eosin staining, ×40); C: Immunohistochemical staining shows aggregate of lymphoma cells that stained positive for the B-cell marker CD20 (×400); D: Characteristic lymphocyte-epithelial lesion of CD20-positive lymphoma cells was also observed (×400).

## CONCLUSION

These results of our case and previous reports suggest that endoscopic resection alone may be a feasible and safe treatment for primary colorectal MALT lymphoma and allows organ preservation. However, long-term follow-up data are needed to determine the efficacy of this treatment approach in a larger

number of cases that have been treated with endoscopic resection alone.

## FOOTNOTES

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- 14 **Li FY**, Zhang XL, Zhang QD, Wang YH. Successful treatment of an enormous rectal mucosa-associated lymphoid tissue lymphoma by endoscopic full-thickness resection: A case report. *World J Gastroenterol* 2022; **28**: 1078-1084 [PMID: 35431493 DOI: 10.3748/wjg.v28.i10.1078]



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