Balloon Tamponade for Post-Sphincterotomy Hemorrhage: A Safe and Effective Approach

Amr Ahmed AbdelAziz Askora[1], Amany Mohamed Ibrahim [2], Marwan Elgohary [3], Nermin Saad [4], Mohamed Abdel Azim Abu Taleb [5]

1. M.B.B.Ch., Faculty of Medicine, Zagazig University,
2. Professor of Internal Medicine, Faculty of Medicine - Zagazig University,
3. Assistant Professor of Internal Medicine, Faculty of Medicine - Zagazig University,
4. Lecturer of Internal Medicine, Faculty of Medicine - Zagazig University,
5. Lecturer of Internal Medicine, Faculty of Medicine - Zagazig University,

Corresponding author: Amr Ahmed AbdelAziz Askora

ABSTRACT

Background: *Post-sphincterotomy bleeding (PSB) is a significant complication of Endoscopic Retrograde Cholangiopancreatography (ERCP), necessitating effective hemostatic strategies to ensure patient safety and procedural success. Among various interventions, balloon tamponade has emerged as a promising technique for controlling hemorrhage due to its rapid hemostatic effect and minimal invasiveness. This review explores the efficacy and safety of balloon tamponade as a first-line or adjunctive therapy in managing PSB. nBalloon tamponade exerts direct pressure on bleeding vessels, promoting clot formation and immediate hemostasis. Studies indicate that it successfully controls bleeding in over 80% of cases, particularly in mild to moderate hemorrhages. It is frequently employed when conventional techniques such as epinephrine injection, endoscopic clipping, or thermal coagulation fail. Comparative analyses suggest that balloon tamponade achieves hemostasis at rates comparable to or exceeding those of other endoscopic interventions, with the added advantage of reduced procedural complexity. Despite its efficacy, balloon tamponade is associated with potential complications, including bile duct injury, mucosal ischemia, and perforation, particularly if applied with excessive pressure or prolonged duration. Careful patient selection, appropriate balloon sizing, and diligent post-procedural monitoring are crucial in mitigating these risks. Moreover, advances in balloon technology, including pressure-controlled devices and bioabsorbable materials, have enhanced the safety profile of this intervention. Clinical guidelines increasingly recognize balloon tamponade as a valuable tool for managing PSB, particularly in patients at high risk for recurrent bleeding. Evidence suggests that its use results in shorter hospital stays, reduced need for blood transfusions, and lower healthcare costs compared to surgical or angiographic alternatives. However, further research, particularly randomized controlled trials, is needed to establish standardized protocols and optimize patient outcomes. In conclusion, balloon tamponade represents an effective, safe, and minimally invasive strategy for controlling PSB during ERCP. Its rapid hemostatic action, ease of application, and favorable patient outcomes make it an essential component of modern endoscopic hemostasis. Ongoing advancements and research will further refine its role in clinical practice, ensuring improved safety and efficacy for patients undergoing ERCP.*

Keywords*:* Balloon Tamponade , Post-Sphincterotomy Hemorrhage

1. INTRODUCTION

Endoscopic Retrograde Cholangiopancreatography (ERCP) is a specialized technique used in the diagnosis and treatment of biliary and pancreatic ductal diseases. It combines endoscopy and fluoroscopy to visualize the bile ducts, pancreatic ducts, and gallbladder, providing both diagnostic and therapeutic capabilities [1].

Initially developed in the late 1960s, ERCP has evolved significantly, shifting from a primarily diagnostic tool to a mainly therapeutic procedure. With the advent of less invasive imaging techniques like magnetic resonance cholangiopancreatography (MRCP) and endoscopic ultrasound (EUS), ERCP is now predominantly used for therapeutic interventions rather than diagnosis [2].

The procedure involves the insertion of a side-viewing duodenoscope through the mouth, esophagus, and stomach into the duodenum. A catheter is then advanced through the endoscope into the ampulla of Vater, where contrast dye is injected to visualize the biliary and pancreatic ducts under fluoroscopic guidance [3].

ERCP is widely employed for managing common bile duct stones, malignant and benign strictures, bile leaks, and pancreatitis-related complications. It enables interventions such as sphincterotomy, stent placement, stone extraction, and tissue sampling through biopsy or brush cytology [4].

One of the most common indications for ERCP is choledocholithiasis, or the presence of stones in the common bile duct. ERCP allows for the removal of these stones through balloon or basket extraction after a sphincterotomy is performed to facilitate passage [5].

ERCP is also crucial in diagnosing and treating strictures and tumors in the biliary and pancreatic ducts. Endoscopic stenting is commonly used to relieve obstruction in patients with cholangiocarcinoma or pancreatic cancer, providing palliation for obstructive jaundice [6].

Complications of ERCP include pancreatitis, infections such as cholangitis, bleeding, and perforation. Post-ERCP pancreatitis (PEP) is the most frequent complication, occurring in approximately 3-10% of cases, and can range from mild to severe [7].

To mitigate the risk of PEP, various preventive strategies have been implemented, including the use of rectal nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), prophylactic pancreatic duct stenting, and adequate hydration with lactated Ringer's solution [8].

ERCP is often performed under conscious sedation or general anesthesia, depending on patient characteristics and procedural complexity. Sedation enhances patient comfort and procedural success while minimizing movement-related complications [9].

Pediatric ERCP is increasingly utilized for congenital biliary anomalies, pancreatitis, and post-liver transplant complications. Despite the smaller ductal anatomy in children, advancements in pediatric endoscopic equipment have made ERCP a viable option for young patients [10].

Advanced ERCP techniques include cholangioscopy, which allows direct visualization of the bile ducts using a fiberoptic or digital system. This enhances diagnostic accuracy for indeterminate strictures and facilitates targeted biopsy collection [11].

Another innovation is the use of endoscopic ultrasound (EUS)-guided biliary drainage as an alternative to conventional ERCP in cases of failed cannulation. EUS-ERCP hybrid procedures are particularly beneficial for patients with altered gastrointestinal anatomy, such as those who have undergone gastric bypass surgery [12].

Training in ERCP requires extensive experience due to the complexity of the procedure. Credentialing guidelines recommend a minimum of 200 supervised cases to develop proficiency in therapeutic techniques [13].

The global availability of ERCP varies, with accessibility being higher in developed regions. In low-resource settings, limited equipment and trained personnel pose significant challenges, impacting the management of biliary and pancreatic disorders [14].

Cost-effectiveness analyses indicate that ERCP is an economically viable option for managing biliary obstruction, reducing the need for more invasive surgical interventions. However, proper patient selection and adherence to guidelines are crucial for optimizing outcomes [15].

Another promising area of research is the development of biodegradable stents, which could eliminate the need for repeat procedures in cases of benign biliary strictures, thus reducing patient burden and healthcare costs [16, 17].

Endoscopic innovations such as robotic-assisted ERCP are also being explored to enhance precision and reduce operator dependency. These technological advancements have the potential to revolutionize the field by improving safety and efficacy [18].

As ERCP continues to evolve, ongoing research and clinical trials are essential in refining techniques, expanding indications, and improving patient outcomes. Multidisciplinary collaboration among gastroenterologists, surgeons, and radiologists remains vital in optimizing the role of ERCP in modern medicine [19].

ERCP remains a cornerstone procedure in the management of biliary and pancreatic disorders. While complications exist, continuous advancements in technology and technique are enhancing its safety and efficacy. Proper training, patient selection, and adherence to guidelines are crucial for achieving optimal results in clinical practice [20].

Post Sphincterotomy Bleeding During Endoscopic Retrograde Cholangiopancreatography (ERCP)

Endoscopic retrograde cholangiopancreatography (ERCP) is a crucial procedure for diagnosing and treating biliary and pancreatic diseases. One of the notable complications of ERCP is post-sphincterotomy bleeding (PSB), which occurs following an endoscopic incision of the sphincter of Oddi. The incidence of PSB ranges between 0.3% and 2% in elective cases, though it can be higher in high-risk groups [21].

PSB can be classified as immediate or delayed. Immediate bleeding occurs during the procedure, whereas delayed bleeding manifests hours to days later. Risk factors for delayed bleeding include coagulopathy, anticoagulant therapy, and large sphincterotomy incisions. The clinical presentation varies from mild bleeding that resolves spontaneously to severe hemorrhage requiring intervention [22].

Several predisposing factors contribute to the likelihood of PSB. These include coagulopathies, use of anticoagulants, platelet dysfunction, prior history of gastrointestinal bleeding, and the presence of large bile duct stones. Additionally, procedural aspects such as the size of the sphincterotomy incision and repeated cannulation attempts further increase the risk [23].

The clinical presentation of PSB ranges from hematemesis, melena, or hematochezia to hemodynamic instability in severe cases. Laboratory findings often reveal decreased hemoglobin levels, prolonged prothrombin time, and thrombocytopenia, necessitating prompt assessment and intervention [24].

The diagnosis of PSB is established through endoscopic visualization during ERCP. Active bleeding may be noted immediately post-sphincterotomy, while delayed bleeding may require repeat endoscopy for confirmation. The severity of bleeding is graded based on the volume of blood loss, hemodynamic impact, and need for transfusion or intervention [25].

Management of PSB depends on the severity of bleeding. Mild bleeding often resolves spontaneously, while moderate to severe cases require therapeutic interventions such as endoscopic hemostasis, hemodynamic support, and blood transfusions if necessary. Endoscopic therapy remains the mainstay of treatment, with several modalities available [26].

Endoscopic hemostatic techniques include epinephrine injection, thermal coagulation, and the placement of hemostatic clips. Epinephrine injection induces vasoconstriction and tamponade effect, providing initial hemostasis. However, its effect is temporary and often requires additional measures such as bipolar coagulation or argon plasma coagulation for definitive control [27].

Hemostatic clips have gained popularity due to their mechanical compression of bleeding vessels. These clips effectively control bleeding without inducing thermal injury to adjacent tissues, reducing the risk of re-bleeding. Studies have shown that clip application is particularly beneficial in patients with visible arterial bleeding post-sphincterotomy [28].

Balloon tamponade using a fully inflated extraction balloon has been reported as an alternative approach for controlling PSB. This technique applies direct pressure to the bleeding site and is particularly useful in cases of diffuse oozing. However, balloon tamponade is often a temporary measure and requires additional endoscopic interventions [29].

In cases where endoscopic measures fail, angiographic embolization is considered. Selective embolization of the bleeding vessel using microcoils or gelfoam can effectively stop hemorrhage in refractory cases. This procedure is especially useful when endoscopic visualization is limited due to excessive blood pooling [30].

Surgical intervention is rarely needed but may be required in cases of uncontrolled bleeding despite endoscopic and radiologic interventions. Surgical approaches include direct oversewing of the bleeding site or biliary decompression procedures. However, the morbidity associated with surgical management necessitates its use as a last resort [31].

Prevention of PSB involves careful patient selection and risk stratification. Patients on anticoagulants should undergo careful pre-procedural assessment, and where appropriate, temporary cessation of anticoagulation should be considered. The American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy (ASGE) provides guidelines on managing anticoagulation around ERCP to minimize bleeding risks [32].

Technical modifications during ERCP can also help prevent PSB. A controlled and stepwise approach to sphincterotomy, avoiding unnecessary large incisions, can reduce bleeding risks. The use of guidewire-assisted cannulation instead of repeated contrast injection has also been associated with lower complications, including bleeding [33].

Patients with a high risk of PSB may benefit from prophylactic endoscopic measures. Some studies suggest that preemptive epinephrine injection or small incremental sphincterotomy incisions can mitigate the risk of bleeding, though these approaches remain controversial [34].

The role of pharmacological prophylaxis is an area of ongoing research. Proton pump inhibitors (PPIs) and somatostatin analogs have been investigated for their potential to reduce post-ERCP bleeding, though evidence remains inconclusive. Tranexamic acid, an antifibrinolytic agent, has also been explored in some settings but is not widely adopted in clinical practice [35].

Post-procedural monitoring is essential for early detection of PSB. Patients should be observed for signs of gastrointestinal bleeding and hemodynamic instability. Serial hemoglobin measurements and coagulation profiles are helpful in assessing ongoing blood loss and guiding transfusion requirements [36].

Despite advances in ERCP techniques and hemostatic strategies, PSB remains a clinically significant complication. Continued research into optimizing procedural techniques, prophylactic strategies, and treatment modalities is essential for improving patient outcomes. Multidisciplinary collaboration involving gastroenterologists, interventional radiologists, and surgeons plays a crucial role in the effective management of this complication [37].

Efficacy and Safety of Balloon Tamponade in Control of Post Sphincterotomy Bleeding During Endoscopic Retrograde Cholangiopancreatography

Endoscopic Retrograde Cholangiopancreatography (ERCP) is a widely utilized procedure for the management of biliary and pancreatic diseases. One of the most common complications associated with ERCP is post-sphincterotomy bleeding (PSB), which can range from mild to severe. Several hemostatic techniques have been developed to manage this complication, with balloon tamponade emerging as a promising intervention for controlling bleeding effectively [38].

Balloon tamponade involves the temporary inflation of a balloon within the biliary or pancreatic duct to provide direct pressure and halt hemorrhage. This method is considered minimally invasive compared to other techniques such as thermal coagulation or epinephrine injection. The use of balloon tamponade has been reported to achieve hemostasis rapidly, with fewer procedural complications, making it a preferred choice in many cases of PSB [39].

Several studies have assessed the efficacy of balloon tamponade in achieving hemostasis following ERCP-related bleeding. Research suggests that this technique can successfully control bleeding in over 80% of cases, particularly in mild to moderate hemorrhages. Additionally, balloon tamponade is often used as a first-line intervention before considering more aggressive treatments such as angiographic embolization or surgery [40].

One of the major advantages of balloon tamponade is its immediate effect on stopping bleeding. The pressure exerted by the inflated balloon compresses the bleeding vessels, allowing for clot formation and stabilization of the hemorrhage. Furthermore, the ease of deployment and rapid hemostatic effect make it an attractive option for endoscopists dealing with acute PSB [41].

Despite its benefits, balloon tamponade is not without risks. Potential complications include mucosal ischemia, bile duct injury, and perforation if the balloon is overinflated or left in place for an extended period. Therefore, careful monitoring and appropriate balloon sizing are crucial to minimizing these risks while ensuring effective hemostasis [42].

Comparative studies have examined balloon tamponade alongside other hemostatic techniques such as endoscopic clipping, hemostatic spray application, and argon plasma coagulation. Findings indicate that balloon tamponade is equally or more effective in achieving initial hemostasis and preventing rebleeding, particularly in cases where other methods have failed [43].

In terms of patient outcomes, those treated with balloon tamponade generally experience shorter hospital stays and reduced need for blood transfusions compared to those requiring surgical or radiological interventions. Additionally, the technique allows for continued endoscopic evaluation and management, reducing the likelihood of prolonged complications [44].

Clinical guidelines now increasingly recognize balloon tamponade as a valuable option for managing PSB. Experts recommend its use in patients with moderate to severe bleeding when standard therapies fail or when there is a high risk of further bleeding. This recommendation is based on growing evidence supporting its safety and efficacy in real-world clinical settings [45].

Endoscopists should be well-trained in the proper use of balloon tamponade to optimize its benefits. Key considerations include selecting the appropriate balloon size, inflation pressure, and duration of application. Training programs and simulation models can enhance the proficiency of endoscopists in deploying this technique effectively [46].

Recent advancements in balloon tamponade technology have further improved its safety profile. Innovations such as pressure-controlled balloons and bioabsorbable materials aim to enhance hemostasis while minimizing risks of tissue damage. These developments underscore the evolving role of balloon tamponade in endoscopic hemostasis [47].

Real-world case series have demonstrated high success rates of balloon tamponade in controlling PSB across different patient populations. Studies indicate that early application of this technique can significantly reduce morbidity and prevent complications related to uncontrolled bleeding [48].

Cost-effectiveness analyses suggest that balloon tamponade is a financially viable option compared to more invasive procedures. The reduced need for additional interventions and shorter hospital stays contribute to overall healthcare cost savings, making it an attractive option for medical institutions [49].

While balloon tamponade is effective, proper patient selection remains critical. Patients with coagulopathies or extensive bile duct injuries may require adjunctive therapies to ensure complete resolution of bleeding. Multidisciplinary collaboration between gastroenterologists, interventional radiologists, and surgeons is often necessary for complex cases [50].

Post-procedural monitoring is essential to ensure successful hemostasis and prevent recurrence of bleeding. Patients should undergo follow-up imaging or endoscopic evaluation, especially in cases where there is a high risk of rebleeding. Antithrombotic therapy management should also be optimized to reduce hemorrhagic risk while maintaining thromboembolic protection [51].

Future research should focus on refining balloon tamponade techniques and exploring novel materials that enhance safety and efficacy. Randomized controlled trials comparing balloon tamponade to other hemostatic modalities would provide more definitive evidence regarding its optimal use in clinical practice [52].

In conclusion, balloon tamponade has proven to be an effective and relatively safe technique for controlling PSB during ERCP. Its rapid hemostatic effect, ease of use, and favorable patient outcomes make it a valuable tool in endoscopic hemostasis. Ongoing advancements and clinical research will

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