# World Journal of *Cardiology*

World J Cardiol 2017 July 26; 9(7): 562-639





Published by Baishideng Publishing Group Inc

World Journal of Cardiology

# Contents

Monthly Volume 9 Number 7 July 26, 2017

# REVIEW

562 Sudden cardiac death in patients with rheumatoid arthritis Masoud S, Lim PB, Kitas GD, Panoulas V

#### **MINIREVIEWS**

- 574 Vascular complications of transcatheter aortic valve replacement: A concise literature review *Chaudhry MA, Sardar MR*
- 583 Peripheral interventions and antiplatelet therapy: Role in current practice Singh P, Harper Y, Oliphant CS, Morsy M, Skelton M, Askari R, Khouzam RN
- 594 Is Entresto good for the brain? Patel N, Gluck J
- 600 Cardiac and pericardial tumors: A potential application of positron emission tomography-magnetic resonance imaging

Fathala A, Abouzied M, AlSugair AA

## SYSTEMATIC REVIEWS

- 609 Hand dysfunction after transradial artery catheterization for coronary procedures Ul Haq MA, Rashid M, Kwok CS, Wong CW, Nolan J, Mamas MA
- 620 Infective endocarditis and thoracic aortic disease: A review on forgotten psychological aspects Suárez Bagnasco M, Núñez-Gil IJ

### **CASE REPORT**

629 Endovascular treatment of paravisceral mycotic aneurysm: Chimmeny endovascular sealing the end of de road

Rabellino M, Moltini PN, Di Caro VG, Chas JG, Marenchino R, Garcia-Monaco RD

634 Percutaneous closure of congenital Gerbode defect using Nit-Occlud<sup>®</sup> Lê VSD coil Phan QT, Kim SW, Nguyen HL

	<i>World Journal of Cardiology</i> Volume 9 Number 7 July 26, 2017	
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<ul> <li>NAME OF JOURNAL World Journal of Cardiology</li> <li>ISSN ISSN 1949-8462 (online)</li> <li>LAUNCH DATE December 31, 2009</li> <li>FREQUENCY Monthly</li> <li>EDITORS-IN-CHIEF Jian-Jun Li, MD, PhD, Professor, Center for Coro- nary Artery Disease, Fu Wai Cardiovascular Hospital, Chinese Academy of Medical Science, Beijing 100037, China</li> <li>Giuseppe De Luca, PhD, Assistant Professor, De- partment of Cardiology, Piedmont University, Novara 28100, Italy</li> <li>Nathan D Wong, FACC, FAHA, PhD, Director, Professor, Heart Disease Prevention Program, Divi-</li> </ul>	sity of California, Irvine, CA 92629, United States <b>EDITORIAL BOARD MEMBERS</b> All editorial board members resources online at http:// www.wignet.com/1949-8462/editorialboard.htm <b>EDITORIAL OFFICE</b> Xiu-Xia Song, Director <i>World Journal of Cardiology</i> Baishideng Publishing Group Inc 7001 Stoneridge Drive, Suite 501, Pleasanton, CA 94588, USA Telephone: +1-925-2238242 Fax: +1-925-2238243 E-mail: editorialoffice@wjgnet.com Help Desk: http://www.f6publishing.com/helpdesk http://www.ignet.com <b>PUBLISHER</b> Baishideng Publishing Group Inc 7901 Stoneridge Drive, Suite 501, Pleasanton, CA 94588, USA Telephone: +1-925-2238243 E-mail: bgoffice@wjgnet.com Help Desk: http://www.f6publishing.com/helpdesk	<ul> <li>PUBLICATION DATE July 26, 2017</li> <li>COPYRIGHT         <ul> <li>© 2017 Baishideng Publishing Group Inc. Articles published by this Open-Access journal are distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial License, which permits use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, the use is non commercial and is otherwise in compliance with the license.</li> </ul> </li> <li>SPECIAL STATEMENT         <ul> <li>Antricles published in journals owned by the Baishideng Publishing Group (BPG) represent the views and opinions of their authors, and not the views, opinions or policies of the BPG, except where otherwise explicitly indicated.</li> </ul> </li> <li>INSTRUCTIONS TO AUTHORS         <ul> <li>http://www.wignet.com/bpg/gerinfo/204</li> <li>ONLINE SUBMISSION</li> </ul> </li> </ul>





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DOI: 10.4330/wjc.v9.i7.634

World J Cardiol 2017 July 26; 9(7): 634-639

ISSN 1949-8462 (online)

CASE REPORT

# Percutaneous closure of congenital Gerbode defect using Nit-Occlud<sup>®</sup> Lê VSD coil

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Author contributions: All authors contributed to the acquisition of data, writing, and revision of this manuscript.

Institutional review board statement: This case report was reviewed and approved by Quang Nam Central General Hospital Institutional Review Board.

**Informed consent statement:** The patient involved in this case report gave his written informed consent authorizing use and disclosure of her protected health information.

**Conflict-of-interest statement:** All the authors have no conflicts of interests to declare.

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Manuscript source: Unsolicited manuscript

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Received: October 23, 2016 Peer-review started: October 23, 2016 First decision: January 14, 2017 Revised: January 29, 2017 Accepted: May 3, 2017 Article in press: May 5, 2017 Published online: July 26, 2017

# Abstract

We present a case report about percutaneous closure of a congenital Gerbode defect using Nit-Occlud<sup>®</sup> Lê VSD coil. The patient was referred to our hospital with a diagnosis of ventricular septal defect (VSD) and severe pulmonary arterial hypertension. But transthoracic echocardiography revealed a communication between the left ventricle (LV) and the right atrial (RA), called Gerbode defect. Catheterization confirmed the shunt from the LV to the RA. We successfully closed the defect with a VSD coil. After uneventful 6 mo follow-up, the patient was out of dyspnea, the symptom urged him to have medical attention. This case report is to discuss the diagnosis and percutaneous treatment approach for this rare congenital heart disease.

Key words: Congenital Gerbode defect; Nit-Occlud® Lê VSD coil; Congenital heart disease; Transcatheter device closure; Device embolization

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**Core tip:** Congenital Gerbode defect is rare, only accounts for about 0.08% among congenital heart diseases. The diagnosis is easily misinterpreted with others condition on clinical examination and echo-cardiography. The treatment of this disease is also lack of recommendation. There are several approaches can be applied for this kind of defect such as conservation, cardiac surgery, intravascular intervention or intra-operative device closure. There are several devices can be used for transcatheter closure such as ventricular septal occluder, atrial septal occluder, ADO I or ADO II. This is the first report using Nit-Occlud<sup>®</sup> Lê VSD coil to close Gerbode defect successfully.



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Phan QT, Kim SW, Nguyen HL. Percutaneous closure of congenital Gerbode defect using Nit-Occlud<sup>®</sup> Lê VSD coil. *World J Cardiol* 2017; 9(7): 634-639 Available from: URL: http://www.wjgnet. com/1949-8462/full/v9/i7/634.htm DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.4330/wjc.v9.i7.634

# INTRODUCTION

The left ventricular to right atrial (LV-RA) communication was first described by Frank Gerbode in 1958<sup>[1]</sup>. This defect can be either congenital or acquired. While congenital LV-RA shunt is very rare, acquired LV-RA shunt is reported more common, can be induced by endocarditis, trauma, valve replacement, myocardial infarction, *etc*<sup>[2]</sup>. There are several varieties of Gerbode defect<sup>[1]</sup>: Supravalvular (direct) type, subvalvular (indirect) type and a combination of these two lesions.

The diagnosis of congenital Gerbode defects is quite challenging: While the clinical symptoms may mimic ventricular septal defect (VSD), it can be misinterpreted on TTE with tricuspid regurgitation and pulmonary arterial hypertension. Further investigation by transesophageal echocardiography (TEE), magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), computed tomographic angiography (CTA), ... may help to determine the right diagnosis.

# CASE REPORT

A 31-year-old male who had dyspnea on exertion 3 mo before hospitalization, was referred to our hospital with a diagnosis of heart failure in patient with VSD and severe pulmonary hypertension. He had healthy active lifestyle, normal physical and mental development. The clinical examination showed a loud harsh holosystolic murmur (4/6 Levine scale) at 4<sup>th</sup> intercostal spaces along left sternal border, radiated downward and a systolic thrill could be palpated. His blood pressure was 125/85 mmHg. The ECG showed sinus rhythm. The BNP was slightly increased. Chest X-ray, ionogram, creatinine, glucose, blood count and clotting times were in normal range. The TTE revealed a shunt between the LV and the RA. The jet went into the RA looked similar to the tricuspid valve regurgitation flow with high velocity, about 4.8 m/s. The other findings included slight dilation of the right heart chambers, mild RV systolic dysfunction and Qp:Qs was 1.6.

Cardiac catheterization was performed. LV contrast injection illustrated quite large shunt from the LV to the RA. The defect was in long conical figuration with diameters of 9.5 mm at the biggest LV ampulla, 4.0 mm at the narrowest position and 8.5 mm length. It was quite far from the aortic valve and coronaries. The pulmonary arterial pressure was 56/22/35 mmHg.

After getting across the defect with a Terumo wire from LV and snaring the wire at the superior vena cava for making the arteriovenous loop, an 8F deli-



Figure 1 Through the defect, the Terumo wire was introduced to the right atrial and superior vena cava from left ventrical (A) and the 8F delivery catheter went from inferior vena cava and right atrial to the left atrial and aorta (B).



Figure 2 The Nit-Occlud<sup>®</sup> Lê VSD coil.

very catheter was introduced to LV and aorta from RA through the defect (Figure 1). Then, a 12 mm × 6 mm Nit-Occlud<sup>®</sup> Lê VSD coil (Figure 2) was deployed to close the defect with aortic approach (Figure 3). The procedure was quite similar to perimembranous VSD occlusion with likely satisfied result (Figure 4). There was only small residual shunt from LV to RA on LV contrast injections and echocardiography, no aortic regurgitation, no cardiac arrhythmia on ECG and the hemodynamic was stable.

But while the patient was kept following on cathlab table for complications, mostly concerning bradycardia and heart block, we detected some free bizarre movement of device distal part (Video 1). The device was going to drift out of the defect at 15 minutes after coil release. We quickly retrieved the coil with multisnare and 10F catheter from the RA through inferior vena cava (Figure 5). Another attempt to close the defect with a bigger 14 mm × 8 mm Nit-Occlud<sup>®</sup> Lê VSD coil was performed (Figure 6). The final result looked fine with mild residual LV-RA shunt, no aortic regurgitation, no arrhythmia. Six hours after the procedure, there was still a grade 2/6 murmur can be found on auscultation and mild shunt from LV to RA on echocardiography. After 24 h, both the murmur and residual shunt flow were gone. After 5 d of close Phan TQ et al. Closure of congenital Gerbode defect



Figure 3 The 12 mm × 6 mm Nit-Occlud<sup>®</sup> Lê VSD coil was deployed with aortic approach.



Figure 4 The 12 mm  $\times$  6 mm Nit-Occlud $^{\odot}$  Lê VSD coil immediately after release.

following up uneventful, the patient was discharged in good physical and mental condition. We have been checking the patient at 1 mo, 3 mo and 6 mo after the procedure. Till now, the patient has no symptom on exertion, the device is in good position without any shunt on echocardiography and there is no murmur on heart auscultation.

# DISCUSSION

Congenital Gerbode defect is rare, only accounts for about 0.08% among congenital heart diseases<sup>[1]</sup>. Patients may have symptoms or not depends on the defect size and the shunt from LV to RA. Heart auscultation can detect a systolic murmur with position and intensity similar to the VSD but slightly lower and radiating downward.

TTE is useful for diagnosis of Gerbode defect. In 2D mode, the LV-RA shunt may be detected in some views, such as parasternal short axis, four and five chambers or subcostal views (Figure 7). The image quality was better in subcostal view as there was no bone or lung tissue to obstruct the view. Pulsed wave Doppler was helpful in detecting the shunt by the high turbulent audio signal. Continuous wave Doppler helped detect and measure peak systolic velocities across the shunt. Color flow imaging was useful in



Figure 5 The drifting coil was retrieved with a multi-snare from the atrial side.



Figure 6 The bigger 14 mm × 8 mm Nit-Occlud<sup>®</sup> Lê VSD coil before (A) and immediately after release (B).

localizing defect position and shunt flow. However, in Gerbode defect, the shunt flow, affected by the septal leaflet of the tricuspid valve, may change direction unexpectedly. So, it can mimic the direction of tricuspid regurgitation flow and made sonographers misrecognize as tricuspid regurgitation in the setting of severe pulmonary artery hypertension<sup>[3]</sup>. In this case, at first, the clinical physician thought about VSD and sent the patient to the sonographer for more detail. The conclusion they received was VSD with very high systolic pulmonary arterial pressure, about 115 mmHg. Both the clinical physician and sonographer were cheated by the shunt flow. So quick clinical examination and echocardiography in this kind of defect may easily lead to a misdiagnosis. The sonographer should meticulously look for Gerbode defect if physical examination suspects VSD but echocardiography can not detect any high velocity flow or aliasing in the right ventricle. The presence of normal diastolic pulmonary arterial pressure using pulmonic regurgitation jet is also very useful to distinguish the true pulmonary arterial hypertension from high velocity jet in the RA caused by Gerbode defect<sup>[4,5]</sup>. Actually, only about 2/3 of the LV-RA shunts of either congenital or acquired origin can be well diagnosed with TTE<sup>[6]</sup>. The 1/3 of others have to rely on other means like contrast echo, TEE, MRI, CTA or catheterization for accurate diagnosis.





Till now, there has been no clear official guidance for optimal treatment of Gerbode defect. Physicians may personally choose suitable therapy among conservation, cardiac surgery, intravascular intervention or intraoperative device closure. Patients without symptom and right ventricular volume overload, due to a small LV-RA shunt, may not need the treatment<sup>[7]</sup>. But if left untreated, the significant LV-RA shunt may lead to progressive congestive heart failure<sup>[8]</sup> and up to 8.7% of patients with LV-RA shunt developed infectious endocarditis in long-term follow-up<sup>[9]</sup>. So, some authors<sup>[10-14]</sup> suggested that correction of this type of defect with significant LV-RA shunt is necessary.

Even though the surgical closure is accepted as a treatment of choice<sup>[12]</sup>, some successful transcatheter closures for Gerbode defect have been reported. There is a paucity of information in the existing literature on transcatheter therapy for this type of defect. Indications of intervention may be same as those in the left to

right shunt lesion<sup>[14]</sup>. The devices used for occlusion this kind of defect varies from centers to centers. The first device reported used to close of an acquired Gerbode defect following VSD surgical correction was Amplatzer ventricular septal occluder<sup>[11]</sup>. Another device, amplatzer septal occluder (ASO) commonly used for atrial septal defect closure, also being used to close Gerbode defect complicated from mitral valve surgery with marked improvement in exercise tolerance<sup>[13]</sup>. The smallest patient reported, a 3-mo old baby with an acquired Gerbode shunt after VSD patch closure, was treated using an amplatzer duct occluder (ADO) with complete closure achieved 2 wk after device deployment and good long term follow-up<sup>[12]</sup>. Recently, a report of 12 Gerbode defect patients that were transcatheterly closed with ADO II showed satisfactory outcomes<sup>[14]</sup>. Until now, there is no specific device purposely manufactured for Gerbode defects closure. The devices used to occlude this kind of defects are borrowed from Phan TQ et al. Closure of congenital Gerbode defect

products created for other defect types such as atrial septal defect, VSD, patent ductus arteriosus, etc. In this case, giving the size and shape of the defect, a suitable device could be chosen a for transcatheter occlusion among ADO, ADO II, membranous or muscular VSD occluder, VSD Coil or ASO. With a quite big and long defect like that, heart block and injuring adjacent structures could likely happen when using ADO, VSD occluder or ASO. A good device might be ADO II, but it was not available in our center at that time. So, we finally decided to use the Nit-Occlud® Lê VSD coil (PFM Medical, Germany), which are commonly used for VSD closure. This device is made of Nitinol coils with securely attached polyester fibers and a cone-in-cone configuration (Figure 2). The bigger proximal cone is more flexible and will be partially deployed on the left ventricular side of the defect. The smaller distal cone will be deployed on the other side of the defect and its diameter should be at least twice the defect smallest diameter. The first device chosen might be undersized purposely, for minimizing surrounding structures injury. That could explain for device embolization after deployment. The second bigger device was appropriate for the defect with firmly sitting in the correct position. So, choosing a suitable device with correct size is very important to prevent device embolization in transcatheter Geporde defect closure.

After device successfully released, there was rising concern of hemolysis and hematuria because the contrast ejection and echocardiography showed small residual shunt. But after 24 h, the murmur on heart auscultation and residual shunt on echocardiography was completely gone. Six months following up also showed steady result with no heart murmur, good device position, no shunt on echocardiography (Figure 8) and the patient achieved almost normal life.

In conclusion, the diagnosis of congenital Gebode defect is quite challenging, can be easily misinterpreted. Percutaneous device occlusion offers a feasible, safe and effective therapy for this type of defect. Among devices used for transcatheter closure of Gerbode defects, the Nit-Occlud<sup>®</sup> Lê VSD coil may be a good candidate.

# COMMENTS

#### **Case characteristics**

A 31-year-old male who had normal physical and mental development presented with dyspnea on exertion and a loud harsh holosystolic murmur at 4<sup>th</sup> intercostal spaces along the left sternal border with a systolic thrill could be palpated.

# **Clinical diagnosis**

Ventricular septal defect.

# Differential diagnosis

Tricuspid regurgitation, mitral regurgitation, pulmonic stenosis, patent ductus arteriosus.

#### Laboratory diagnosis

The BNP was slightly increased. Other labs were within normal limits.

#### Imaging diagnosis

Echocardiography showed a shunt from left ventricle to the right atrium.

# Pathological diagnosis

Communication between the left ventricle and right atrium (congenital Gerbode defect).

#### Treatment

The defect was transcatheterly closed using a Nit-Occlud $^{\circ}$  Lê VSD coil with no residual shunt at 6 mo follow-up.

# **Related reports**

Congenital Gebode defect is a rare congenital heart disease and can be easily misinterpreted. Percutaneous device occlusion offers a feasible, safe and effective therapy for this disease.

#### **Experiences and lessons**

In congenital Geborde defect, careful review of echocardiography is an important key to avoid misdiagnosis and the transcatheter closure with an appropriate device is a crucial factor to ensure the procedural success.

#### Peer-review

The reported case is well described and interesting.

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> P- Reviewer: Said SAM, Teragawa H S- Editor: Kong JX L- Editor: A E- Editor: Wu HL







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