

ROLE OF MDCT AORTOGRAM IN EVALUATION OF PATIENTS WITH MILD, MODERATE AND SEVERE HEMOPTYSIS

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Abstract:

Hemoptysis is the expectoration of blood that originates from the lower respiratory tract. It is usually a self-limiting event but in fewer than 5% of cases it may be massive, representing a life-threatening condition that warrants urgent investigations and treatment. Multidetector computed tomography (MDCT) angiography is a useful examination to detect the source of the bleeding in patients with hemoptysis. The aim of the study was to study the role of MDCT aortogram in evaluation of patients with mild, moderate or severe hemoptysis.

Methods: The study population included 41 patients presenting with hemoptysis who underwent MDCT aortogram in the region of thorax after applying the inclusion and exclusion criteria. The criteria's such as clinical presentation, analysis of lung findings on MDCT chest aortogram, analysis of vasculature on MDCT chest aortogram, correlation of MDCT findings with conventional angiography / DSA in patients who underwent endovascular procedures, correlation of MDCT findings with bronchoscopic findings in patients who underwent bronchoscopy, and finally and Correlation of MDCT findings with clinical course of the patient were analyzed.

Results: A total of 41 patients who presented with mild, moderate and severe hemoptysis were analyzed using MDCT aortogram. Based on the findings on MDCT aortogram and the severity of hemoptysis, the patients were taken up for endovascular intervention for management of hemoptysis and the findings in conventional angiography was correlated with MDCT angiography.

Keywords– Hemoptysis, MDCT aortogram, bronchoscopic findings.

Introduction:

Hemoptysis is defined as expectoration of blood from the lower respiratory tract, i.e., from tracheo-bronchial tree or the pulmonary parenchyma. Death is rarely caused by blood loss, rather it is by airway compromise as a result of seepage of blood into the airways and alveoli.

Hemoptysis is considered mild, moderate or severe depending upon the volume of blood expectorated by the individual. A volume of <100mL/ day is considered mild, 100-300mL per day is considered severe and >300ml per day is considered severe. Identification of the source and cause of bleeding is essential for the evaluation of hemoptysis. MDCT aortogram plays an important role in detecting the cause of the bleed, prior

to intervention such as bronchial artery embolization or surgical intervention, with greater accuracy [1].

Multi-detector row computed tomographic angiography allows for a noninvasive and rapid evaluation to assess hemoptysis. This mode of imaging allows for both thin-section axial scans and more complex reformatted images which allow for a clearer interpretation of the origins and anatomical pathways of systemic arteries responsible for hemorrhage [2].

Bronchiectasis, chronic bronchitis, lung malignancy, tuberculosis, and chronic fungal infection are various conditions responsible for hemoptysis which are routinely identified with MDCT. Vascular anomalies such as pulmonary arteriovenous malformations and bronchial artery aneurysms are less commonly encountered [3].

However recurrent hemoptysis could be a result of contributions from the non-bronchial systemic arterial system following bronchial artery embolization which needs rapid evaluation and management. Hence the present study was planned to determine the specific causes of hemoptysis on CT angiography, to correlate the amount of hemoptysis with bronchial arterial anatomy and correlate the findings with bronchial angiogram during bronchial artery embolization where applicable, to correlate the findings of CT angiography with bronchoscopic findings and to correlate the findings with patient's clinical course in the hospital [4].

Materials and Methods:

Study details

The study population included 41 consecutive patients with mild, moderate or massive hemoptysis who were referred to the department of Radiology for chest imaging and MDCT aortogram to assess the lung pathology and vascular anatomy. Multi-detector CT was performed on all the patients with Siemens Somatom Definition AS 128 slice Multi-detector CT scanner with 5 mm collimation and gantry speed of 0.05 sec and pitch of 1.2 sec, 120 kVp and 345 effective mAs. First, non-contrast axial cuts were obtained, thereafter contrast was administered (Omnipaque (Iohexol) -350 mg I/ml), typical doses of 1.5 mg/kg (60-90 ml) through pressure injector (Imaxeon, SW version- 1.5-.12) using smart prep software (RCU manager) (FIG 4 & FIG 5) and ROI were kept at the descending aorta, after which arterial phase was obtained [5].

Analysis performed

The typical scan parameters involved 5 mm and 1 mm slice thickness, coronal, axial and sagittal reconstruction, with 120 MA and 60-80 Kvp. The CT examinations were analyzed on dedicated workstations, this included Aquarius systems (Aquaris Nutrition Edition Ver. 4.4 TERA RECON Protected by U.S. Patent 6,826,297 @ 1998-2009 TeraRecon, Inc. All rights reserved) or Syngovia (127.0.0.1 @ 2009-2016 Siemens Healthcare) dedicated work station. The analysis was performed of the axial cuts (5 mm), thin section reconstructions (1 mm). Multiplanar reformats were performed and image analysis was done

in multiple planes for the details of the lung findings and pseudoaneurysms if any. Maximum intensity projections (MIP) were performed for vessel analysis. The analysis was performed by Radiologists experienced in cardiothoracic imaging and CT/MR angiography (> 5 years' experience). The conventional angiograms and interventional procedures were performed by interventional radiology team [6].

Inclusion and exclusion criteria:

All patients who present for MDCT thoracic aortogram and chest CT in department of Radiology and imaging with mild, moderate or massive hemoptysis and in whom the site and cause of the bleed were ultimately confirmed. Patients with life threatening massive hemoptysis which required an emergent endovascular embolization procedure without any prior MDCT analysis, cases which were not ready for any further treatment following imaging diagnosis, patients in whom adequate follow-up was not available, patients in whom CT angiography is contraindicated such as high creatinine values secondary to renal insufficiency or allergy to iodinated contrast media were excluded from the study. Moreover, patients with hemoptysis due to lung tumors were generally excluded from the study, since a CT angiography was not generally performed in them and a diagnosis of tumors was generally established on conventional contrast enhanced CT (CECT) or PET CT. However, patients with lung tumors presenting with severe hemoptysis in which an endovascular procedure was needed to be done were included in the study with a pre procedure CT angiography having been performed in these patients [7].

Statistical analysis

Data was entered into Microsoft excel data sheet and was analyzed using SPSS 22 version software. Categorical data was represented in the form of Frequencies and proportions. Chi-square test was used as test of significance for qualitative data. Continuous data was represented as mean and standard deviation.

Results:

The study included 41 consecutive patients with mild, moderate or massive hemoptysis who were referred to the department of Radiology for chest imaging and MDCT aortogram to assess the lung pathology and vascular anatomy, after applying the inclusion and exclusion criteria mentioned above.

This included 31 males and 10 females. The age range of the patients was from 20 to 75 years and mean age was 47. The age range in male patients was 20 to 71 and in female patients from 21 to 75 years and the mean age of male patients was 45 and of female patients was 48. The average duration of symptoms was of 1 month and ranged from 1 day to 15 years. All of the patients presented with complaints of hemoptysis.

There was acute onset of hemoptysis (onset within 2 weeks) in 10 cases, while there was a chronic presentation (onset greater than 2 weeks) in 31 cases. The quantification of hemoptysis was done and 19 patients had mild (volume less than 100 ml/day) hemoptysis, of these 8 had chronic streaky hemoptysis, 14 patients had moderate hemoptysis (volume between 100 to 300 ml/day) while 8 patients had severe hemoptysis (volume greater than 300 ml/day). All

the patients with severe hemoptysis were however clinically stable with preserved vitals and hence could undergo a CT angiography prior to performing an endovascular intervention. All the clinically unstable patients with severe hemoptysis with instability of vitals, underwent emergent endovascular procedures and were not included in our study.

In addition to hemoptysis, note was made of additional presenting complaints such as chest pain, cough, fever and difficulty in breathing, and of these most common additional complaint was chest pain and cough, present in 30 patients, while difficulty in breathing was present in 9 cases and fever in 5 cases. A relevant past history of any thoracic disease such as tuberculosis, aspergilloma, bronchiectasis, lung tumors etc. was also noted to help in etiologic analysis.

Patients general condition: A note of patients general condition was done with respect to noting of vital parameters such as heart rate, blood pressure and oxygen saturation (SPO₂). All the patients in our study had stable vitals, since all the patients with unstable vitals had already been taken up for direct endovascular procedure.

Table 1–Distribution of parameters:

	Count	%
Sex		
Female	10	24.4%
Male	31	75.6%
Age		
20 to 30 years	12	30%
31 to 40 years	10	25%
41 to 50 years	9	22.5%
51 to 60 years	6	15%
>60 years	3	7.5%
Categorization of hemoptysis		
1. Streaky	4	9.75%
2. Mild	15	36.5%
3. Moderate	14	34%
4. Severe/massive	8	19.5%
Etiology distribution		
Active TB	9	22.5%
Post TB sequelae	14	35%
Bronchiectasis	6	15%
Lung Mass	4	10%
COVID 19	2	5%
Aspergilloma	2	5%
Types of bronchial arteries		
1. Type I	14	34%
2. Type II	12	29%
3. Type III	2	4.8%
4. Type IV	13	31%
CT angiography findings		
Normal bronchial arteries	20	48.7%

Hypertrophied bronchial arteries	21	51.2%
Nonbronchial systemic collaterals	38	92.6%
-Absent	3	7.3%
-Present		
Bronchopulmonary shunts		
-Absent	37	90.2%
-Present	4	9.7%
Pseudoaneurysms		
-Absent	38	92.6%
-Present	3	7.3%

Analysis of the lung findings on MDCT chest aortogram:

The lung findings were noted in soft tissue (mediastinal) and lung window settings. The lungs were completely normal with no significant findings in 2 patients. 14 patients had postinfective sequelae with cavitation /fibrosis and bronchiectasis. 9 patients had changes consistent with active TB with centrilobular/tree-in bud nodules in addition to other changes such as cavitation or fibrosis, 6 patients had only bronchiectasis as a predominant feature. A pattern of consolidation /air space opacities was present in 4 patients signifying changes consistent with pneumonitis. Lung tumors as a cause of significant hemoptysis were identified in 4 cases. Additional findings such as interstitial lung disease in 2 patients, pleural pathology with thickening or effusion in 6 patients. One patient had a congenital etiology with sequestration as a cause of recurrent hemoptysis.

Analysis of vasculature on MDCT chest aortogram:

Bronchial arteries could be identified in all cases in our study. The most common levels of origin of the bronchial arteries were from T4 to T8 vertebral levels. Majority (39 cases) of the bronchial arteries were noted originating from the descending thoracic aorta, which an arch origin was noted in 2 cases. Majority 30 of the bronchial arteries had an origin of within 2.5cm of carina. Type I bronchial artery was noted in 14 patients, type II anatomy in 12 patients, type III anatomy in 2 patients, a type IV anatomy in 13 patients. However, types V to VIII were not encountered in any of four cases.

Hypertrophy of the arteries (defined as arterial diameter > 2mm in the proximal course) was noted in 20 patients, with hypertrophied single artery in 16 patients and bilaterally hypertrophied bronchials in 4 patients. In addition, in 8 patients there was hypertrophied bronchial on one side with only one single hypertrophied branch with the other branch on the ipsilateral side being nonhypertrophied. In 21 patients hypertrophied bronchial were not noted. Tortuosity of the bronchial arteries defined as undulating course of the artery with wavy appearance, was noted in 27 patients and tortuosity of the arteries coexisted with hypertrophy of the arteries, seen in 11 patients. Presence of any aneurysms/pseudoaneurysms or active arterial contrast extravasation from the bronchial arteries or its branches was not seen in

any of the patients in our study. An attempt was made to identify any spinal cord branches arising from the bronchial arteries in our study with specific attention to spinal course with hair pin bend, however any such spinal branches were not identified in our study. Two cases however had direct pulmonary arterial involvement with pulmonary artery pseudoaneurysms identified in both, one a case of Rasmussen aneurysm in a case of active TB and another a case of large left pulmonary artery pseudoaneurysm in a case of necrotizing pneumonia in background of post COVID sequelae of post COVID interstitial fibrosis.

Hypertrophied non-bronchial systemic collaterals were present in 9 and tortuosity was noted in 5 patients. Of these most common was supply from internal mammary artery in 3 patients, while in 5 patients there was supply from intercostal arteries, 3 patients from costocervical trunk, 1 patient from thyrocervical trunk and axillary artery branches (chiefly lateral thoracic artery) in 3 patients. The predominant pattern of hypertrophy and tortuosity correlated with the supply to the diseased lung parenchyma along with abnormal blush and hypervascularity in the involved regions. In none of the patients with a congenital bronchopulmonary sequestration, was there a pseudoaneurysm from the supplying intercostal artery branch, in none of the other patients was there an aneurysm/pseudoaneurysm arising from the abnormal non-bronchial systemic collateral arteries.

Correlation of MDCT findings with conventional angiography:

16 patients underwent endovascular procedure based on the Multidisciplinary team discussion (MDT) involving the departments of Respiratory Medicine, General Medicine and Interventional Radiology. Typically, all patients with severe hemoptysis underwent endovascular procedure. 5 patients with mild or moderate hemoptysis underwent endovascular procedures since the symptoms were recurrent or not effectively controlled with medications, bronchoscopic interventions or conservative measures.

On comparing the findings of CT angiography against the conventional angiography/DSA, considering the latter as gold standard, we found CT angiography to be 98% accurate in demonstrating the bronchial anatomy type with correlation between the two modalities (p value <0.03). CT angiography was 98% accurate in demonstrating the site of origin of the artery from the aorta and 100% accuracy (sensitivity-100%, specificity-100%, PPV-100%, kappa value-1) was obtained in correctly predicting the hypertrophy and tortuosity. Overall CT correctly predicted the abnormal site of vascularity in all cases with respect to the bronchial circulation.

With respect to the non-bronchogenic systemic collaterals, CT correctly demonstrated the supply in 3 cases, however additional non-bronchogenic systemic supply not clearly demonstrated by CT angiography was picked up on conventional angiography in 6 cases. CT also correctly demonstrated the pseudoaneurysm from the intercostal artery in a lone case of sequestration in our study.

Correlation of MDCT findings with the clinical course of the patient:

Hypertrophy and tortuosity of the bronchial arteries correlated with increasing severity of stenosis with 8 cases of moderate or severe stenosis demonstrating hypertrophied and tortuous bronchial arteries, while in 10 cases with moderate and severe hemoptysis were bronchial

arteries normal. Chiefly this scenario was noted in conditions such as aspergilloma with cavity and internal contents, where in 2 cases, there was no bronchial hypertrophy, despite significant recurrent bleed. Also in bleeding lung tumor, seen in 4 cases, there was no significant hypertrophy and only a vague tumor blush. A hypertrophy and tortuosity of the bronchial arteries was noted in 8 cases with streaky or mild hemoptysis, while in 11 of these cases the arteries were normal. Overall, 50% of cases having severe hemoptysis showed normal bronchial arteries and the other 50% showed hypertrophied bronchial arteries.

In 9 patients who underwent endovascular intervention, the bronchial arteries were hypertrophied, while they were normal in 7 patients in endovascular intervention group. Overall, 9 patients who underwent MDCT angiography who showed hypertrophied bronchial arteries were taken up for conventional angiography for immediate intervention.

Patients with significant findings on CT angiography including hypertrophied bronchial arteries, significant recruitment of non-bronchial systemic collaterals and presence of pulmonary artery pseudoaneurysms, had need for endovascular intervention or prolonged nonvascular management with subsequent prolonged length of hospital stay (mean duration - 1 week), compared to patients who did not have these findings (mean 4 days). Also patients with these findings had more need for ICU admission stay (2% patients), compared to patients who did not have above findings (none).

Discussion:

Hemoptysis is defined as expectoration of blood from the lower respiratory tract, i.e., from tracheo-bronchial tree or the pulmonary parenchyma.

Hemoptysis is considered mild, moderate or severe depending upon the volume of blood expectorated by the individual. Identification of the source and cause of bleeding is essential for the evaluation of hemoptysis. MDCT aortogram plays an important role in detecting the cause of the bleed, prior to intervention such as bronchial artery embolization or surgical intervention, with greater accuracy [8].

Multi-detector row computed tomographic angiography allows for a noninvasive and rapid evaluation to assess hemoptysis. This mode of imaging allows for both thin-section axial scans and more complex reformatted images which allow for a clearer interpretation of the origins and anatomical pathways of systemic arteries responsible for hemorrhage.

Bronchiectasis, chronic bronchitis, lung malignancy, tuberculosis, and chronic fungal infection are various conditions responsible for hemoptysis which are routinely identified with MDCT [9].

MDCT aortogram can play a valuable role in evaluating patients with hemoptysis. With the exception of those presenting in an emergent life threatening settings with unstable vitals, requiring urgent endovascular procedures, in remainder of the stable patients or those with chronic symptoms, MDCT angiographic evaluation can provide detailed information of the lung parenchyma as well as vascular involvements, helping in planning subsequent treatment for these patients. However prior to proceeding with this investigation, a careful application of the mentioned inclusion and exclusion criteria needs to be done in all cases. A thorough clinical

assessment of these patients with respect to classification and categorization of hemoptysis, etiologic workup and assessment of vitals is essential prior to proceeding to CT exam. Evaluation of the lung parenchymal pathology precedes the analysis of the vasculature and helps in localizing the pathology [10].

Analysis of the vasculature involved a detailed assessment of three principal axes which may be responsible for bleedings either solely or in combinations, these include the bronchial arteries, the non-bronchial systemic collaterals and the pulmonary arteries. Analysis of different aspects of the bronchial arterial or the non-bronchial systemic arterial supply was found to have significant impact on effectively planning subsequent endovascular procedure and arranging the required hardware needed to cannulate these vessels. The bronchial

arterial patterns and anatomy can be very heterogeneous and varied and MDCT aortogram provides an optimal evaluation of these features. Similarly MDCT aortograms effectively detail the non-bronchial systemic collaterals, however conventional angiography/DSA is more effective in demonstrating the finer branching patterns as well as reveals additional involvements such as from the axillary artery branches. The pulmonary arterial involvements are usually obvious on MDCT aortograms with exquisitely demonstrated aneurysms and pseudoaneurysms and any additional pulmonary arterial hypervascularity generally represents shunts rather than direct arterial supply and may not need endovascular procedure from the pulmonary artery side. Overall, there is an excellent correlation with the findings on MDCT aortograms and those of DSA/conventional angiography [11].

Conclusion:

Further therapeutic decision for the management of these patients are best taken in urgently called MDTs of the relevant clinical departments and the MDCT aortogram findings play an important role in these MDTs with respect to therapeutic decision making. Findings of hypertrophied arteries and significant non-bronchial systemic collaterals generally signify significant (moderate or severe hemoptysis) and need for endovascular interventions, however in few cases these findings may not correlate and the patient may have mild or streaky hemoptysis and respond well to conservative measures. Hence correlation of these findings with the clinical scenario of the patients is important. Also, in certain conditions such as bleeding tumors and aspergilloma, there may be absence of significant hypertrophy of arteries despite severe bleeding and presence of parenchymal staining or blush are more often present. MDCT findings also correlated with other clinical features such as length of hospital stay and need for ICU admission [12].

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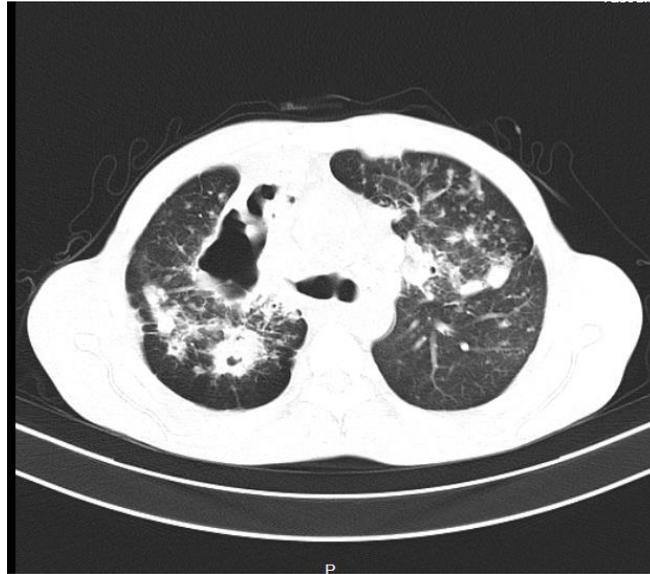
SUPPLEMENTARY DATA

CASE 1

40 year old male patient with an episode of massive hemoptysis of 500ml, preceded by multiple episodes of mild hemoptysis in the past 2 years. Known case of TB on ATT.

CT findings

A large irregular cavity is noted in the right upper lobe with adjacent consolidation and pleural thickening.



Multifocal irregular nodules and masses with spiculations and radiating fibrous strands noted in both lung fields predominantly in the upper lobes. Multifocal air spaces and centrilobular nodules with patchy ground glass opacification noted in both lung fields. Peribronchovascular thickening in right hilum with narrowing of the right main bronchus and adjacent lobar / segmental bronchi. Bilateral bronchial arteries appear hypertrophied supplying the involved lung segments.

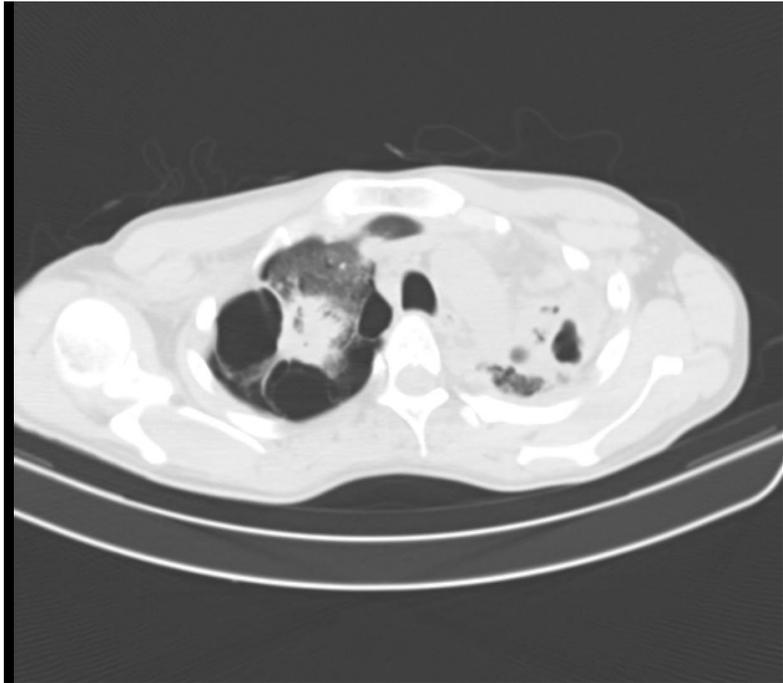
CASE 2

- 27 years old male came with complaints of massive haemoptysis, 2 episodes of more than 400 ml.
- Multiple mild episodes in the past 1 year off and on

CT findings

Showed features suggestive of sequelae of pulmonary Kochs in both lung fields with volume loss, bronchiectatic changes with fibrosis and collapse of left upper lobe with mediastinal shift. Dilated and tortuous left bronchial and posterior intercostal arteries with no evidence of contrast extravasation/pseudoaneurysms from bronchial arteries.

Collapse and mediastinal shift to the left with multiple emphysematous bullae on the right



The common trunk of origin of both bronchial arteries could not be clearly delineated on CT angiography. Hypertrophied posterior intercostal artery on CT angiography.

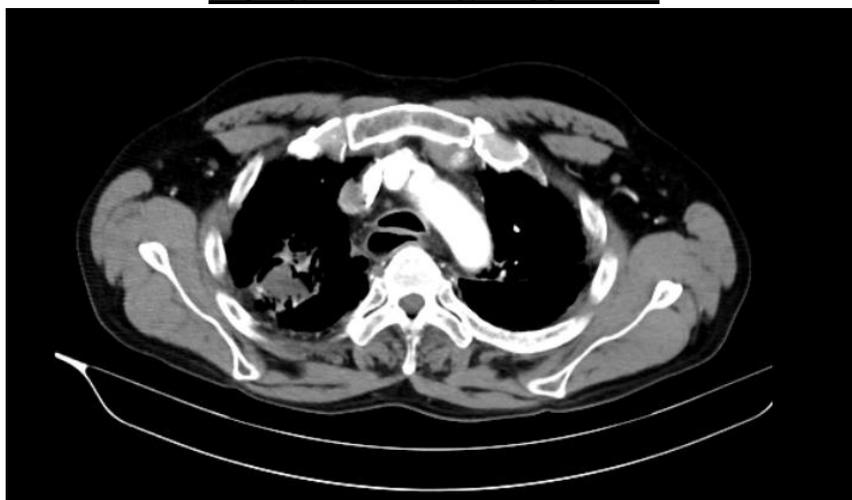
CASE 3

57 years old male patient presented with recent onset massive hemoptysis. Total 3 episodes – one of 400 ml and others of 150 to 200 ml (over 1 week).

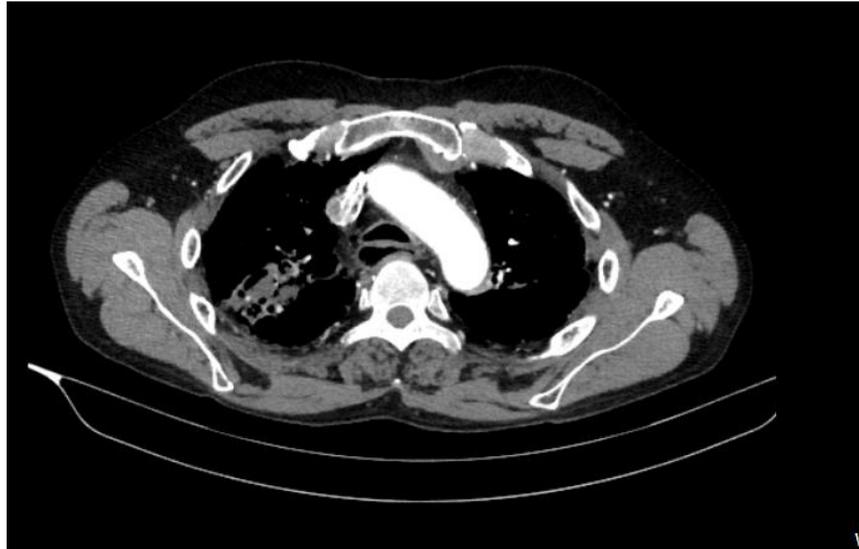
CT findings

- Cavity with aspergilloma in the apical segment of right upper lobe.
- Bilateral apical fibrosis- S/o sequelae of old tuberculosis.
- Para septal and centri- acinar emphysematous changes with bibasal fibrosis.

Aspergilloma of right upper lobe



Predominant supply to the cavity from the right bronchial artery branches



CASE 4

A 21-year male presented with recurrent streaky haemoptysis with mild right sided chest pain on and off since 5 years.

The haemoptysis was mild in quantity, typically streaky in nature.

CT findings

CT showed a well-defined round consolidation /soft tissue mass in the posteromedial segment of right lower lobe, note that the lesion attached to the adjacent pleural by a stalk. The bronchi is seen draping around the lesion without actually supplying the lesion as shows in the figure below.



MDCT aortogram shows an enlarged artery from the descending aorta supplying the lesion



There was intralesionalhypervascularity and a small pseudoaneurysm was also visualised, this likely was the cause of recurrent haemoptysis.It could have been the result of recurrent infections within the lesion.Angiography confirmed a large artery arising from the descending thoracic aorta and supplying the lesion with extensive neovascularity which was subsequently embolised using 300microns PVA particles.

