

# **BILIARY COLIC AND GALL BLADDER DISEASE**

Benjamin R. Doolittle, M.D., M. Div.

## **Week 9**

### **Educational Objectives:**

1. Recognize the common signs and symptoms of biliary colic
2. Appreciate the differential diagnosis of biliary colic
3. Understand the radiographic work-up for suspected biliary colic
4. Understand the indications for definitive treatment

### **CASE ONE:**

**Ms. Murphy, a 55-year-old, presents to your office for recurrent abdominal pain. She shares, “I was at my cousin’s wedding, had a big plate of linguini, and felt this terrible pain right here,” (she holds her right flank), “with a funny feeling in my shoulder. I started throwing up, and the pain wouldn’t go away, so I went to the Emergency Room. They said my blood work was normal, shot me up with some pain meds. They did an ultrasound, told me I had gallstones, and sent me home. I’ve had these sorts of pains for about a year, but never as bad. I’m so afraid that this pain will return. I’ll do anything so that it doesn’t happen again.”**

**Her PMH is notable only for hypertension and diabetes. Her exam is benign, notable only for mild abdominal discomfort upon deep palpation in the right upper quadrant.**

### **Questions:**

1. What is biliary colic?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. In her history, what is suggestive for biliary colic? What else could be causing her symptoms?

3. **In the ER, she received an ultrasound. Was this the right study? Are there any other studies that could be helpful?**
  
4. **Does she need surgery?**
  
5. **If so, what kind of procedure should she receive? What are the risks and benefits of definitive surgery?**
  
6. **Is she at higher risk for complications due to her diabetes? What if she had cirrhosis? What if she were pregnant?**

**Primary References:**

1. Vogt D. Gallbladder Disease: An update on diagnosis and treatment. *Cleveland Clinic Journal of Medicine*. 2002; 69(12): 977-984.
2. Keus F., de Jong J.A.F., Gooszen H.G., van Laarhoven C.J.H.M. Laparoscopic versus open cholecystectomy for patients with symptomatic cholecystolithiasis. *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews*. 2006, Issue 4. Art. No.: CD006231. DOI: 10.1002/14651858.CD006231. Abstract only.