Aspiration of an Instrument During Dental Treatment

A 56-year-old man was referred to the emergency department by his dentist. A 0.8 cm × 2.0 cm screwdriver had fallen into the patient’s throat during implant treatment and could no longer be located after swallowing and inspiration. The patient’s only symptom was a slight sensation of pressure in the laryngeal region, and clinical examination showed no abnormality apart from decreased breath sounds at the base of the right lung. Chest radiography (p.a. and lateral) showed the foreign body projected onto the right lower lobe bronchus (Figures 1 and 2). The object was removed without complications by means of fiberoptic bronchoscopy. This case shows that ingestion cannot be assumed even in a patient with mild symptoms. Diagnostic imaging is indicated to verify the location and, in the event of aspiration, perform bronchoscopic extraction.

Aspiration of a foreign body during dental treatment is rare, according to data from France and Japan. However, given the amount of dental treatments performed in humans, it is the second most common cause, after aspiration events in children.

Dr. med. Doris Eis, MSc, Institut für Notfallmedizin, Universitätsspital Zürich, Schweiz, doris.eis@usz.ch

Dr. med. Fiorenza Gautschi, Klinik für Pneumologie, Universitätsspital Zürich, Schweiz

Dr. med. Sira Thiel, Institut für Notfallmedizin, Universitätsspital Zürich, Schweiz

Conflict of interest statement: The authors declare that no conflict of interest exists.

Translated from the original German by David Roseveare.

Cite this as: Eis D, Gautschi F, Thiel S: Aspiration of an instrument during dental treatment. Dtsch Arztebl Int 2021; 118: 377. DOI: 10.3238/arztebl.m2021.0079