

Manuscript Details

Manuscript number	IJC_2018_977
Title	Anomalous Left Coronary Artery from the Pulmonary Artery (ALCAPA) diagnosed in adulthood: Varied Clinical Presentation, Therapeutic Approach and Outcome
Article type	Original article

Abstract

Introduction: The diagnosis of ALCAPA syndrome is sporadic in adulthood, of the limited cases in the literature most are incidental or without symptoms. There is a broad spectrum of clinical manifestations of ALCAPA syndrome however, including sudden cardiac death. **Cases:** We present herewith a series of 12 consecutive patients with ALCAPA, all diagnosed in adulthood (between 18 and 73 years of age). Five patients developed symptoms (breathlessness) after the fourth decade of life, 3 were undiagnosed despite a history of previous mitral valve repair, one presented with heart failure, one with resuscitated cardiac arrest, whereas two patients were asymptomatic. We review in this paper, the clinical history, diagnostic approach and therapeutic choices of ALCAPA syndrome. **Conclusion:** ALCAPA syndrome is not confined to childhood, late diagnosis in adulthood has a varied clinical presentation. ALCAPA syndrome should be particularly considered as a potential, albeit uncommon cause of mitral regurgitation and/ or dilated cardiomyopathy.

Keywords	ALCAPA; ischaemia; mitral regurgitation; adults
Taxonomy	Congenital Heart Disease
Manuscript category	Original clinical research studies, basic science/translational research papers
Manuscript region of origin	Europe
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To the Editor of “International Journal of Cardiology”

London, 19th February 2018

Dear Editor,

Please find attached our MS entitled: “Anomalous Left Coronary Artery from the Pulmonary Artery (ALCAPA) diagnosed in adulthood: Varied Clinical Presentation, Therapeutic Approach and Outcome” for consideration and possible publication in the “International Journal of Cardiology”.

The manuscript is being submitted only to the International Journal of Cardiology, it will not be submitted elsewhere while under consideration, it has not been published elsewhere, and should it be published in the International Journal of Cardiology, it will not be published elsewhere either in similar form or verbatim without permission of the editors. All authors are responsible for reported case, have been involved in the diagnostic management of the patients and contributed to the writing and revision of the manuscript. There are no financial conflicts of interest.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Boutsikou', written in a cursive style.

Maria Boutsikou, MD, PhD, MSc for all authors

Highlights

- ALCAPA syndrome may present in late adulthood with a varied clinical presentation.
- Angina and shortness of breath are among the most common symptoms in adults with ALCAPA syndrome
- Mitral regurgitation and LV dilatation are common presentations of the syndrome and are frequently overlooked.
- Multimodality imaging is crucial for the initial diagnosis and follow up
- Patients with inducible ischaemia should be offered surgical repair as it provides symptomatic and prognostic benefit.

**Anomalous Left Coronary Artery from the Pulmonary Artery (ALCAPA)
diagnosed in adulthood: Varied Clinical Presentation, Therapeutic Approach
and Outcome**

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Funding: MAG has received support from the British Heart Foundation, London UK
and Actelion, Allschwil, Switzerland.

SBN has received support from the British Heart Foundation, London UK

Conflicts of interest: none

Key words: ALCAPA, ischaemia, mitral regurgitation, adults

Abstract

Introduction: The diagnosis of ALCAPA syndrome is sporadic in adulthood, of the limited cases in the literature most are incidental or without symptoms. There is a broad spectrum of clinical manifestations of ALCAPA syndrome however, including sudden cardiac death.

Cases: We present herewith a series of 12 consecutive patients with ALCAPA, all diagnosed in adulthood (between 18 and 73 years of age). Five patients developed symptoms (breathlessness) after the fourth decade of life, 3 were undiagnosed despite a history of previous mitral valve repair, one presented with heart failure, one with resuscitated cardiac arrest, whereas two patients were asymptomatic. We review in this paper, the clinical history, diagnostic approach and therapeutic choices of ALCAPA syndrome.

Conclusion: ALCAPA syndrome is not confined to childhood, late diagnosis in adulthood has a varied clinical presentation. ALCAPA syndrome should be particularly considered as a potential, albeit uncommon cause of mitral regurgitation and/ or dilated cardiomyopathy.

Abbreviations:

PA: pulmonary artery

LCA: left coronary artery

LAD: left anterior descending artery

RCA: right coronary artery

LM: left main stem

LIMA: left internal mammary artery

PDA: patent ductus arteriosus

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LV: left ventricle

CXR: chest X-ray

CT: Cardiac Computed Tomography

CMR: Cardiovascular Magnetic Resonance

CRT-D: Cardiac Resynchronization Therapy Defibrillator

NYHA: New York Heart Association

MVR: mitral valve replacement

VT: ventricular tachycardia

VF: ventricular fibrillation

AHA: American Heart Association

CABG: Coronary Artery Bypass Grafting

AP window: aortopulmonary window

ICD: Implantable Cardioverter Defibrillator

Introduction

Anomalous origin of the left coronary artery from the pulmonary artery (ALCAPA) is a rare but well described cardiac anomaly. It is present in 1 in 300,000 live births or 0.5% of children with congenital heart disease [1]. The first reports of anomalous origin of coronary artery from the PA were made by Krause and Brooks in 1865 and 1885 respectively [2-3], based on autopsy studies describing arteries originating from the PA and joining branches of the coronary artery tree. Konstantinowitch in 1906 and Abrikossoff in 1911 reported ALCAPA cases based on autopsies in a 2 day and a 5 month old infant. However, the first clinical pathologic correlation of ALCAPA syndrome was made by Garland, Bland and White in 1933 [4].

Embryologically, ALCAPA may result from abnormal separation of the conotruncus into the aorta and PA, or persistence of the pulmonary buds in conjunction with involution of the aortic buds, the former eventually forming the coronary arteries. Therefore, the LCA and left heart receive blood from the PA [5-7].

Two types of ALCAPA syndrome have been described. The classic presentation is with symptom onset in the first or second month of life when, PA pressure falls after closure of the ductus arteriosus [1]. The majority of patients with ALCAPA syndrome if not operated on, die within the first year of life from ischaemic cardiomyopathy and endocardial fibrosis due to decreasing oxygen supply in the LCA territory [8]. It has been suggested that without treatment, 15% of patients may survive to adulthood but approximately 90% of these die suddenly at a mean age of 35 years [1,9].

Diagnosis in living adults (versus autopsy series) is thought to be extremely rare with just a few cases reported in the literature [1,10]. Although angina is frequently described as common clinical presentation of ALCAPA in adulthood, patients may be asymptomatic with atypical symptoms at diagnosis. Surgical myocardial revascularization regardless of myocardial viability in adults diagnosed with ALCAPA has been suggested in American Heart Association for Adult Congenital Heart Disease treatment guidelines [11]. Rationalizing treatment options, however, remains challenging due to variety of clinical presentation, symptoms and degree of deterioration in

cardiac function. We describe herewith, the varied clinical presentation in 11 adults from our tertiary centre all with late diagnosis of ALCAPA syndrome, the diagnostic work up and our management strategy.

Methods

Study population

Twelve consecutive patients with a diagnosis of ALCAPA syndrome in adulthood followed in our institution were identified from our dedicated electronic database and retrospectively studied. Their demographic and clinical information was obtained from patients' records. In all patients the diagnosis of ALCAPA syndrome was established in adulthood. Medical history, previous symptomatology and initial clinical presentation were documented in all, as their diagnostic work up, therapeutic approach and follow up data.

Results

Patient characteristics- medical background

Age at ALCAPA syndrome diagnosis ranged from 18 to 73 years with a mean (SD) of 42(\pm 16.8) years. Demographic, clinical, imaging and outcome data are presented in Table 1.

Ten of the 12 patients (83.3%) became symptomatic shortly before the diagnosis was made or the treatment was initiated. Symptoms included angina, shortness of breath and arrhythmia. One patient (8.3%) experienced cardiac arrest; subsequent investigations revealed ALCAPA syndrome associated with a genetically confirmed diagnosis of Long QT syndrome. Three patients from our series (25.0%) presented with mitral regurgitation and underwent surgical mitral valve repair or replacement prior to the diagnosis of ALCAPA syndrome being established. One patient (8.3%) was diagnosed at the age of 60 with signs and symptoms of decompensated left heart failure. Finally two patients (16.6%) with previous history of congenital heart disease and cardiac surgery in childhood had: A) repaired aortic coarctation and PDA (with three syncopal episodes in the past and developing symptomatic advanced heart failure) and B) bicuspid aortic valve who underwent ligation of PDA and was asymptomatic with incidental diagnosis of ALCAPA syndrome at routine follow up.

Clinical examination and diagnostic work up

The most frequent finding on clinical examination was the presence of a pansystolic murmur at the left sternal border and the apex (in 10/12). Two patients had signs of heart failure with significant impairment of LV systolic function.

All patients underwent a series of tests examining coronary and cardiac anatomy and function and presence and degree of myocardial ischemia.

Cardiomegaly on CXR was present in 7 patients, all with impaired LV function. Q or inverted T waves in the lateral or precordial leads were present in 12lead ECGs in 9 patients .

Initial or suspected diagnosis was made by echocardiography in a high volume specialized centre. The main echocardiographic features included retrograde flow from the LAD into the PA with significant left to right shunting, presence of intramyocardial collateral vessels and dilatation of the RCA origin. LV dilatation with variable degree of LV systolic impairment was present in 8 cases. Moderate to severe mitral regurgitation with calcification of the mitral annulus and the papillary muscles was common (n=7, Figure 1).

Coronary angiography, CT or CMR confirmed the diagnosis in all cases and showed the presence of a single large RCA originating from the aorta and extensive collaterals arising from the LCA draining into the PA. Exercise test, stress echocardiogram, Thallium myocardial perfusion scan and perfusion CMR with gadolinium study were performed for assessing myocardial ischemia and/or viability (Figure 2). Nine out of the twelve patients (75%) had at least one of these investigations positive for ischemia.

Treatment management

Myocardial revascularization and restoration of dual coronary artery supply was attempted in eight patients (66.6%) who underwent surgical repair of the ALCAPA. Three types of repair were performed in our study group. These included ligation of LM (n=1), ligation of LM and re-implantation of LAD to the aorta (n=3), ligation of anomalous LAD, implantation of vein graft or left

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297 internal mammary artery (LIMA) to the LAD (n=3) and Takeuchi procedure (n=1) (Figure 4).
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299 Surgery was offered to two more patients who declined. Both were reluctant to undergo a surgical
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301 operation for prognostic reasons as they were asymptomatic; one of them had evidence of myocardial
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303 ischaemia.
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307 A conservative approach was adopted in two patients presenting with heart failure at the time
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309 of diagnosis but no significant inducible ischemia, as surgery seemed unlikely to convey substantial
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311 prognostic benefits. Instead, optimization of medical therapy treatment and Cardiac CRT-D
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313 implantation were employed.
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316 **Follow up**

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319 Of the 12 patients studied, 10 were alive at a mean follow up of 5.3 ± 4.2 years. One patient
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321 died two months after surgical repair, the post-operative period being complicated by lung sepsis and
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323 multi-organ failure. The remaining 7 patients (58.3%) who underwent surgical repair report no
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325 symptoms and remained stable on periodic follow up of 5.9 ± 3.8 years; two (16.6%) developed atrial
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327 fibrillation which was controlled well medically. The 2 patients who declined surgery have remained
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329 stable at follow up (7.5 ± 7.7 years). Finally, the last 2 patients who were managed conservatively and
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331 received a CRT-D device, both improved their functional status (now in NYHA II functional class)
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333 and remained stable on clinical follow up (3.5 ± 0.7 years).
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337 **Discussion**

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340 We report herewith our experience with 12 consecutive patients presenting in adulthood with
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342 ALCAPA syndrome. Clinical presentation was varied, 6 patients had symptomatic relief after
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344 surgery, one died from sepsis; four patients are followed up medically. Six of our patients diagnosed
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346 after their 4th decade of life; six developed symptoms leading to diagnosis in the fifth decade of life
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348 or later; the older patient at the time of diagnosis was 73 years of age. ALCAPA syndrome typically
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350 presents in the first year of life.
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357 Presentation in adulthood, particularly in late adulthood is thought to be extremely rare. In a
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359 previously published systematic review on ALCAPA syndrome based on reported cases from 1908 to
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361 2008, the mean reported age at diagnosis was 41 years [1]; of the 151 adults identified, 48 were older
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363 than 50 years. There is an increase in cases of ALCAPA syndrome diagnosed in late adulthood, this
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365 was related to advances in noninvasive imaging, at least in part.
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368 Three patients from our series had a previous history of MVR, due to congenital mitral
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370 stenosis, “childhood dilated cardiomyopathy” and/or mitral regurgitation in association with left
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372 ventricular systolic dysfunction. Mitral regurgitation is known to be common clinical finding in
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374 patients with ALCAPA syndrome, evident even early in the course of the disease with or without
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376 concomitant ventricular dysfunction [12]. It can be functional, secondary to a dilated left ventricle
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378 and annulus. [13] or the result of papillary muscle ischemia and fibrosis [1,14-16]. In the majority of
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380 pediatric patients reparative surgery for ALCAPA results in improvement of mitral regurgitation [13,
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382 17]. Our data suggests that this combination of dilated cardiomyopathy and mitral regurgitation is
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384 also present in adults with ALCAPA syndrome and therefore should be considered in the differential
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386 diagnosis.
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390 It has been suggested that the risk of sudden cardiac death with ALCAPA decreases with age
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392 [11]. Autopsy studies identifying adult cases with untreated ALCAPA showed an average age at
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394 death of 35 years [9,18-19]. Formation of scarred tissue due to myocardial ischemia and new
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396 ischemic episodes could trigger life threatening arrhythmias and death [1]. In our series, a 25 year old
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398 male, had ventricular fibrillation as his first clinical manifestation of ALCAPA syndrome. This
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400 patient was also diagnosed with long QT syndrome, thus it is somewhat unclear whether his
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402 ALCAPA related ventricular dysfunction and ischaemia/fibrosis or the Long QT syndrome was the
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404 triggering factor for this episode. He, nevertheless responded well to surgery and ICD implantation
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406 with no further VT/VF.
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415 Although ALCAPA is generally an isolated defect, it can be associated with other cardiac
416 congenital malformations like ventricular septal defect, PDA, tetralogy of Fallot and aortopulmonary
417 window. In our series, two patients had a PDA ligated or bicuspid aortic valve (with coarctation of
418 the aorta). PDA leads to volume overload, potentially with functional mitral regurgitation, thus the
419 diagnosis of ALCAPA may be overlooked. ALCAPA syndrome with bicuspid aortic valve and/or
420 coarctation of the aorta is rare [1,20].
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429 Different imaging modalities used for the diagnosis of the syndrome in our case series,
430 revealed the presence of an extensive network of collateral arteries from the RCA to LCA and
431 retrograde flow into the PA. The development of extensive collaterals from a dominant dilated RCA
432 to LCA which supply oxygenated blood to the diaphragmatic portion of the left ventricle, part of the
433 septum and the lateral wall, is the main protective mechanism from ischemia and infarction [9,14,
434 21-25]. Thus, adults may present with symptoms when reverse flow into the PA may lead to
435 coronary steal syndrome and/or if stenosis of the collateral vessels develop compromise myocardial
436 perfusion [26-28].
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447 Resting ECG is usually abnormal in patients with ALCAPA syndrome with ST changes and
448 Q waves mainly in the anterior and lateral leads. ECG abnormalities could also occur during exercise
449 testing. Myocardial perfusion imaging may also be abnormal [1,16,29]. Eight of the eleven patients
450 in our series had a leftward QRS axis, Q waves in anterior and lateral leads and ST changes in
451 anterolateral leads. Cardiopulmonary exercise testing, stress echocardiography or myocardial stress
452 perfusion imaging (CMR or Nuclear) was performed in all patients and documented ischaemia in 8
453 cases. Our findings are in agreement with previous studies showing stress ECG and stress imaging
454 tests being positive for ischaemia in 85-87% [1].
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465 Echocardiography set the primary diagnosis of ALCAPA in the vast majority of our cases.
466 Dilatation of the proximal part of the RCA, retrograde flow from LCA into the PA and prominent
467 septal flow were universal findings [30-31]. Notably, transthoracic echocardiography raised the
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473 suspicion of the presence of ALCAPA in three asymptomatic patients with history of previously
474 repaired cardiac lesions. Echocardiography is used in everyday clinical practice; its main limitations
475 are poor image quality in patients with difficult echo windows and difficulties in visualizing the
476 anomalous origin of the LCA. Compliment imaging such as CT and CMR permit the direct
477 visualization of coronary vascular anatomy/ course with 3D reconstruction of the coronary arterial
478 tree. Furthermore, CMR provides assessment of biventricular size and function, estimation of valvar
479 abnormalities and shunts and, with pharmacological stress perfusion assessment of myocardial
480 viability in the absence of ionizing radiation [32]. In most of our cases CT and/or CMR were the
481 imaging techniques that confirmed the definitive diagnosis.

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Cardiac catheterization and selective coronary angiography may demonstrate the presence
and extent of collaterals, quantify the left to right shunt and provide end diastolic pressures.

According to the latest AHA treatment guidelines [11], surgery is the only definitive
treatment of ALCAPA syndrome suggested even in asymptomatic patients due to the lifelong risk of
ischaemia, ventricular arrhythmias and sudden cardiac death [1,8-9]. Different surgical techniques
have been employed including ligation of LCA and CABG using a saphenous vein graft or LIMA,
reimplantation of the left coronary artery to the aorta and the Tackeuchi procedure [1]. The latter is
based on the formation of an AP window with intrapulmonary baffle to connect the origin of the
anomalous LCA to the aorta (Figure 3) [33]. Early surgical treatment restores normal coronary
circulation and adequate myocardial perfusion preventing long-term myocardial ischaemia and
fibrosis. Four of our patients were not operated; two declined operation, whereas for the remaining
two it was felt that a surgical repair would not be beneficial due to severe ventricular dysfunction at
diagnosis and lack of significant inducible ischemia. Notably, in 151 cases of ALCAPA patients
from a recent review, 37% of patients older than 50 years of age were managed medically [1]. The
suggested lower risk of sudden cardiac death in older patients and the relative increase in surgical
risk in older patients with other comorbidity may both have been contributing [1].

Conclusion

ALCAPA syndrome may present in late adulthood with a varied clinical presentation from asymptomatic to angina and sudden cardiac death. Mitral regurgitation with “dilated cardiomyopathy” seems also to be also a common and may have been overlooked. Echocardiographic features such as a large RCA and retrograde flow in the LCA should raise suspicion of ALCAPA which can be confirmed by CMR and/or CT. Patients with inducible ischaemia should be offered surgical repair, associated with symptomatic and probably prognostic benefit.

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FIGURE LEGENDS

Figure 1. A1-2. 2D and color 2D on parasternal short axis view. White arrows show the dilated right coronary artery (RCA). **B1-2.** 2D and color 2D on parasternal short axis view. White arrows on color 2D show the increased flow in the intraventricular collateral vessels from the RCA to the left coronary artery (LCA). **C1-2.** 2D and color 2D on parasternal short axis view. White arrows on color 2D show the retrograde flow from the LCA into the pulmonary artery.

Figure 2. Advanced imaging of ALCAPA syndrome. A. Coronary angiography. Dilated RCA and extensive collaterals to the LCA. **B.** CT coronary angiogram- 3D reconstruction. LCA origin from the main pulmonary artery. **C.** Cardiac MRI ECG and respiratory navigator-gated 3D SSFP- axial plane **Ci:** dilated RCA originating normally from the right coronary sinus, **Cii:** anomalous origin of the LCA from the main pulmonary artery-**D.** Cardiac MRI- SSFP cine image 3chamber view: presence of extended collateral vessels in the septal wall. Arrows point the septal collateral vessels from RCA to the LCA. **E-F:** Cardiac MRI-late gadolinium images. Basal short axis (E) and four chamber view (F): Sub endocardial myocardial fibrosis at the lateral wall.

Figure 3. Types of surgical repair of ALCAPA syndrome. **A.** Anomalous origin of left coronary artery (LCA) from main Pulmonary artery (MPA). **B.** ligation of anomalous LCA, implantation of vein graft or left internal mammary artery (LIMA) to the LAD. **C** re-implantation of LCA to the aorta **D.** Takeuchi procedure establishing continuity between the aorta and the abnormal orifice of the LCA by creating an aortopulmonary window and an intrapulmonary tunnel or baffle.

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Table 1. ALCAPA syndrome diagnosed in adulthood: Demographics, clinical, imaging data and outcome data.

Case	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Gender	M	F	M	M	F	M	F	F	F	F	M	F
Age at clinical presentation (years)	18	21	25	25	37	45	46	48	49	52	60	73
Presenting symptoms	No	SOB	SOB/angina	VF	No	SOB	SOB	SOB	Angina	AF	SOB	Angina
NYHA Class	I	II-III	II	I	I	III	II	I	II	II	III	II
Heart Murmur	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Abnormal ECG	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Paced	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Abnormal	-	Yes	Yes	No	-	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	-	Yes	No

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CXR

Abnormal Yes Yes - - Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes -

ETT/MPI

MR grade at diagnosis +3 +2 MS +3 - +/-1 +3 +2 +1 +2 +2 +1

Previous mitral intervention MVR MVR MVR No No No No Repair No No No No No

LVEF, % 38 46 >60 46 60 20 51 43 58 64 34 55

Preoperative arrhythmia No No Yes; VF arrest prior to repair No No Yes; NSVT No No No No No

Type of ALCAPA surgery MVR/ LIMA to LAD Takeuchi procedure Ligation of LMS aorta and patch closure of the MVR, Ligation of LMS of LCA into the aorta and patch closure of the Mitral repair/ reimplantation of LCA into the aorta and patch closure of the N/A N/A MVR/ reimplantation of LCA into the aorta and patch closure Ligation of LMS, SVG to LAD. Reimplantation of LAD to the aorta N/A N/A Ligation of LMS, LIMA to LAD.

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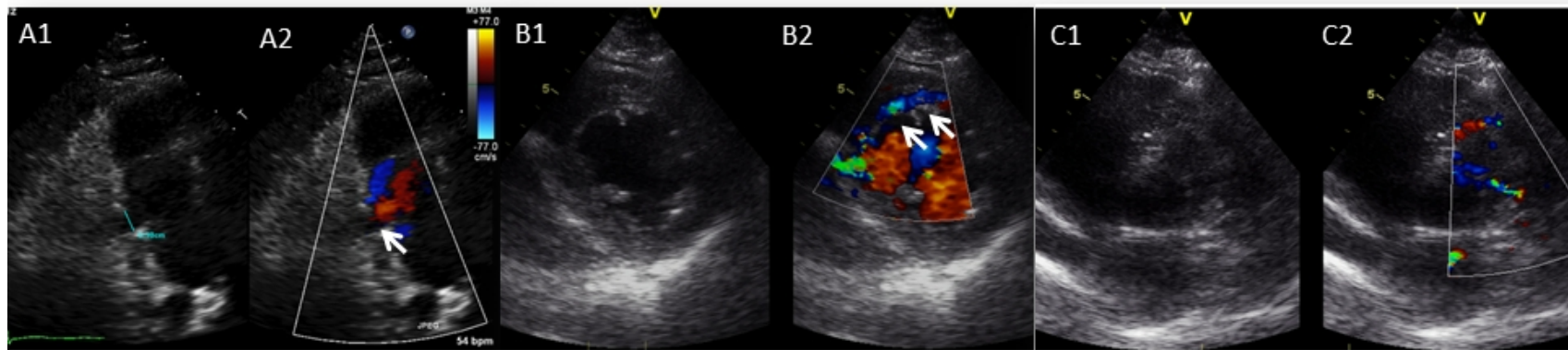
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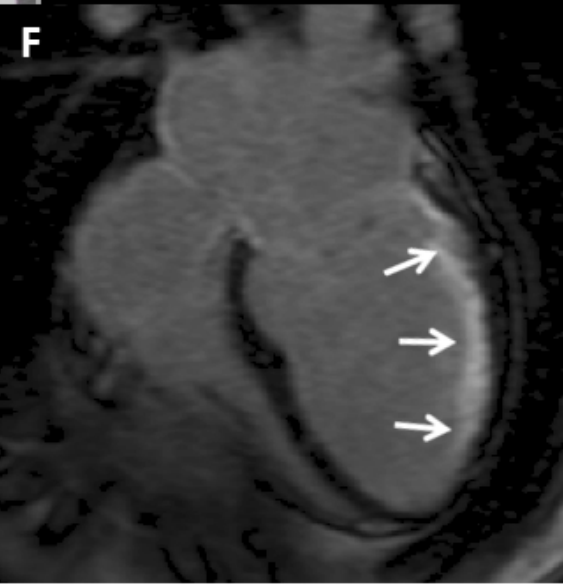
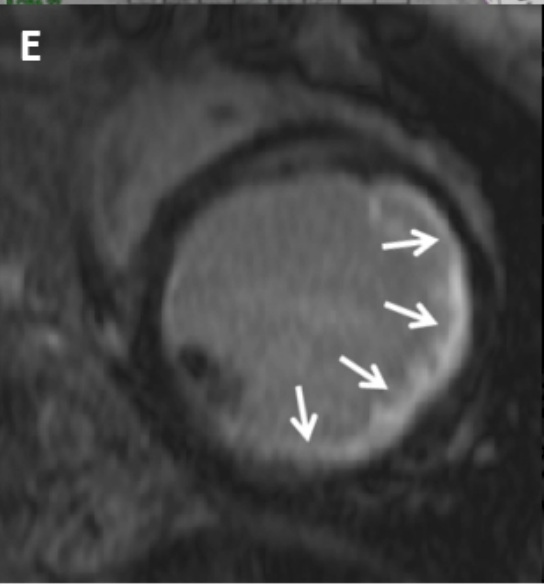
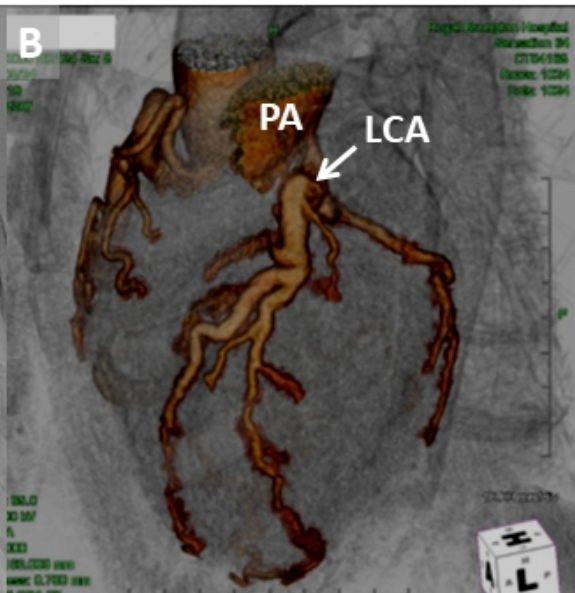
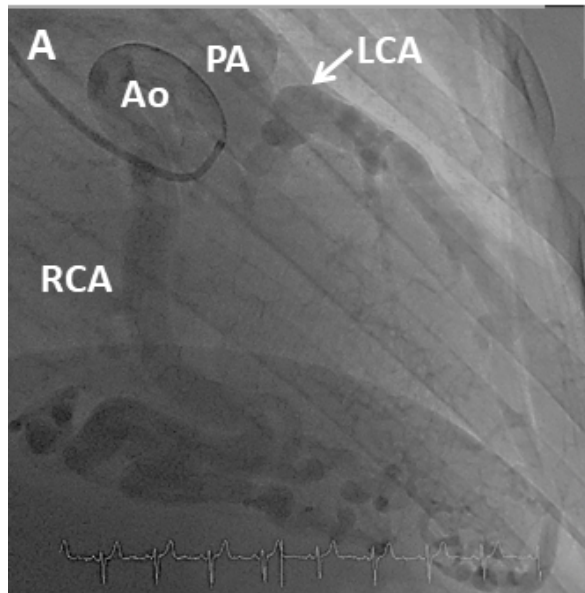
ALCAPA presentation in adulthood

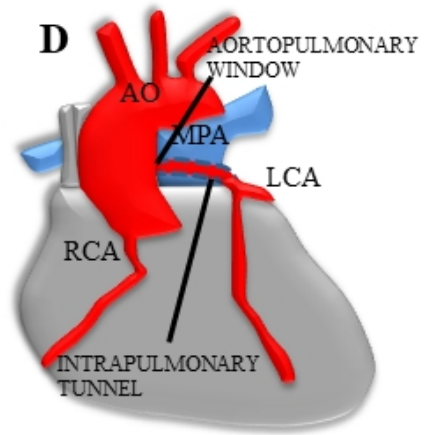
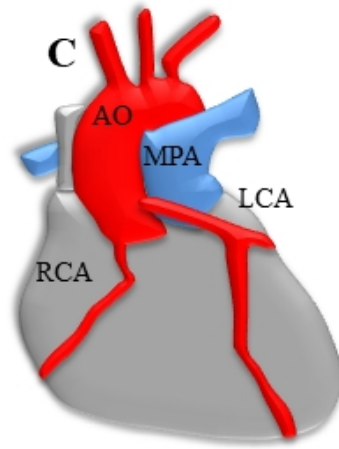
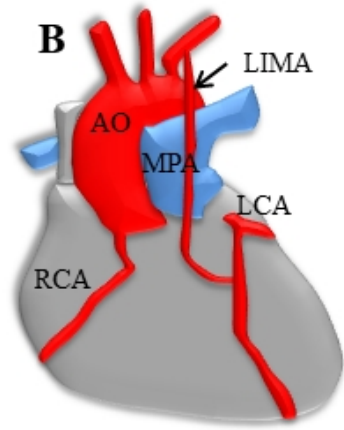
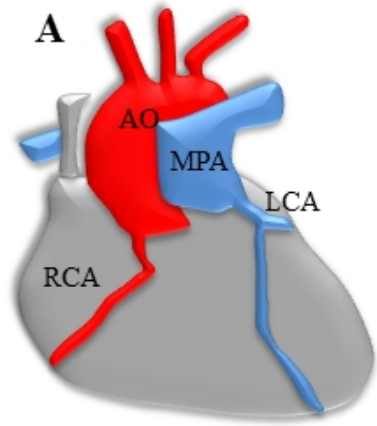
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Follow up to date (years)	11	6	8	9		13	3	0.5		5	2		2	4	Perioperative death
Postoperative arrhythmia (AF)	Yes	No	No	No		-	-	No		No	No		-	-	No
Device implantation	No	No	No	ICD		No	CRT-D	No		No	No		No	CRT-D	PPM preoperatively

F:female, M:male, SOB: shortness of breath, AF: atrial fibrillation, VF: ventricular fibrillation, NYHA; New York Heart Association Class, CXR; chest x-ray, ETT; exercise tolerance test, MPI; myocardial perfusion imaging, MR: +/-1: trivial, +1: mild, +2: moderate, +3: severe, MS: mitral stenosis, LAD: left anterior descending artery, LIMA: left internal mammary artery, SVG: saphenous vein graft, PA: pulmonary artery, AF: atrial fibrillation, CRT-D: cardiac resynchronization therapy- defibrillator, ICD: Implantable Cardioverter Defibrillator, PPM: permanent pacemaker, MVR: mitral valve replacement







Author Agreement Form – International Journal of Cardiology

Manuscript Title: **Anomalous Left Coronary Artery from the Pulmonary Artery (ALCAPA) diagnosed in adulthood: Varied Clinical Presentation, Therapeutic Approach and Outcome**

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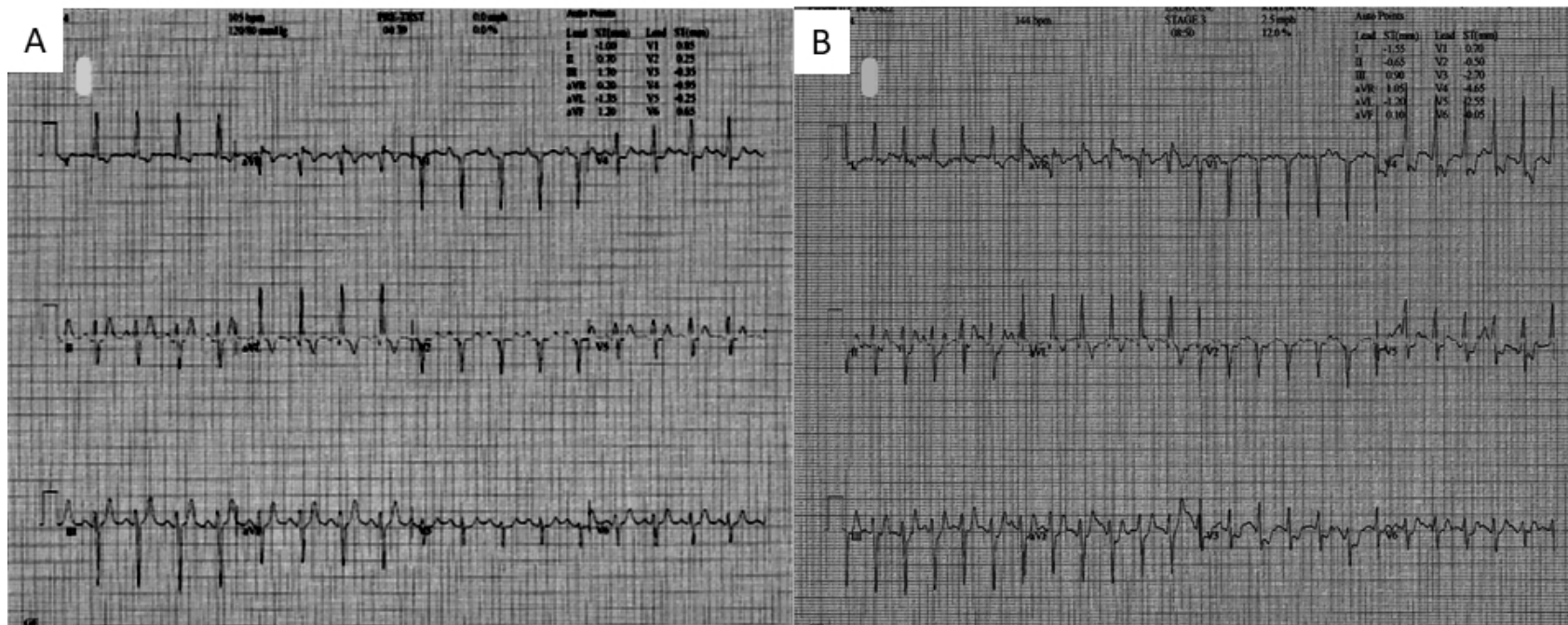
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This statement is to certify that all authors have seen and approved the manuscript being submitted, have contributed significantly to the work, attest to the validity and legitimacy of the data and its interpretation, and agree to its submission to the *International Journal of Cardiology*.

We attest that the article is the Authors' original work, has not received prior publication and is not under consideration for publication elsewhere. We adhere to the statement of ethical publishing as appears in the International of Cardiology (citable as: Shewan LG, Rosano GMC, Henein MY, Coats AJS. A statement on ethical standards in publishing scientific articles in the International Journal of Cardiology family of journals. *Int. J. Cardiol.* 170 (2014) 253-254 DOI:10.1016/j.ijcard.2013.11).

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ECG of a patient with ALCAPA syndrome. **A.** Rest ECG. Sinus rhythm with left axis deviation. Q waves and T wave inversion in V1 and V2 precordial leads. **B.** Stress ECG. ST wave depression in I and V3-V4 leads on peak exercise.