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NOVEL ALFA-PUMP TREATMENT FOR REFRACTORY ASCITES: THE EVOLVING ROLE OF THE UROLOGIST

Hypothesis / aims of study

Management of refractory ascites is challenging; salt restriction and regular large volume paracentesis form the mainstay of treatment. The novel Automated Low-Flow Ascites (ALFA) pump (Figure 1) is an implantable device being trialled on a large-scale throughout Europe; initial pilot data is promising (1) The subcutaneous pump automatically transfers fluid from the peritoneal cavity into the urinary bladder, enabling lower urinary tract voiding of ascitic fluid (Figure 2). Optimisation of lower urinary tract function is therefore of paramount importance.

Our institution is the first in the United Kingdom to implant these devices. Therefore, we designed a urological protocol for the assessment and management of this complex patient group and describe the management of our initial patient cohort in order to increase awareness of this device amongst the urological community.

Study design, materials and methods

All trial participants complete an IPSS and perform urinary flow-rate and post void residual, prior to a Urological consultation. Participants are counselled as to the importance of a well-functioning lower urinary tract to enable micturition of large ascitic volumes. All participants are followed up by the Urology team post-pump insertion.

Results

Five participants have been prospectively evaluated for an ALFA pump; Three patients have undergone pump insertion at our centre. All have required invasive urological investigation or treatment. Two of the three patients have undergone surgical treatment for significant LUTS (urethral stricture and BPH). One patient has been investigated for macroscopic haematuria post-pump insertion.

Interpretation of results

ALFA-pump placement puts a high demand on the lower urinary tract; ongoing urological support and optimisation of function for recipients pre and post operatively is paramount to prevent and identify urological complications and ensure quality of life.

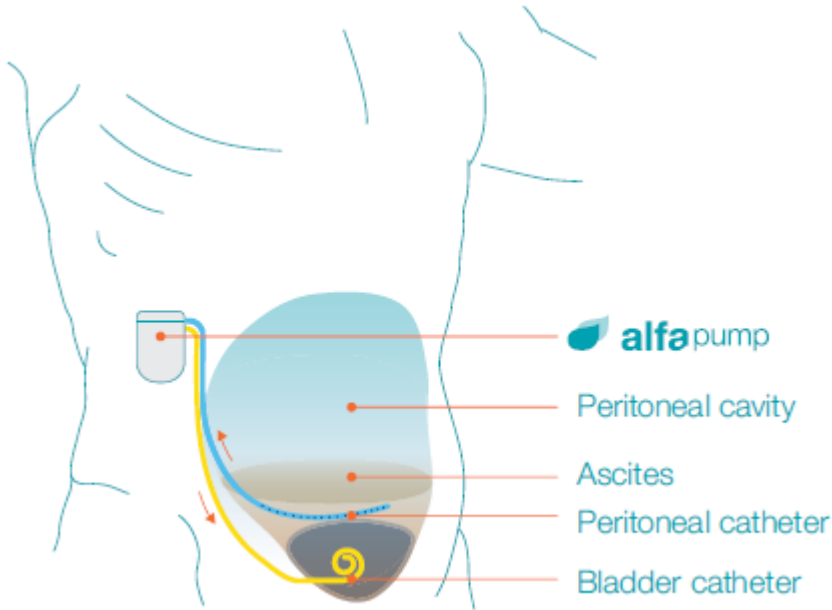
Concluding message

Urologists should be aware of these novel devices and their role in the assessment and management of this medically-complex patient group.

Figure 1: The ALFA pump (Sequana Medical)



Figure 2: Placement of an ALFA pump



References

1. Bellot P et al. Automated low flow pump system for the treatment of refractory ascites: A multi-center safety and efficacy study. J Hepatol (2013), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jhep.2012.12.020>

Disclosures

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