

Courvoisier's Sign

Courvoisier's sign (or law) describes an **enlarged, palpable gallbladder** in patients with **obstructive jaundice caused by tumors** of the biliary tree or by pancreatic head tumors. This kind of biliary obstruction evolves slowly. The gall bladder will be dilated, with a thin wall; it is not tender to the touch. By contrast, acute cholecystitis due to obstruction by stone(s) is a quick process that causes a dilated gall bladder that is tender to the touch (Murphy's sign). The inflammation of chronic cholelithiasis results in a shrunken, fibrotic gallbladder.^[1]

Couvoisier's sign can be found in patients with:

- biliary tumor (cholangiocarcinoma);
- periampullary carcinoma (adenocarcinoma of Vater papilla or duodenum);
- pancreatic head cancer^[2];
- lymph node metastasis in the porta hepatis^[1].

Links

Related articles

- Obstructive jaundice
- Cholangiocarcinoma
- Pancreatic cancer

References

1. BURKITT, H. George – QUICK, Clive R. G. *Essential surgery : problems, diagnosis and management*. 4. edition. Edinburgh ; New York : Churchill Livingstone, 2007. 793 pp. pp. 387,. ISBN 9780443103469.
2. KASPER, Dennis L – FAUCI, Anthony S – LONGO, Dan L, et al. *Harrison's principles of Internal Medicine*. 16th edition. New York : McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc, 2005. 2607 pp. pp. 537. ISBN 0-07-139140-1.