Blue Esophagus

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An 85-year-old female nursing home resident, with a known history of dementia, cerebrovascular disease, hypertension, and chronic dysuria, presented with a day’s history of pain on the right side of the chest, nausea, and vomiting of blue material. When results from electrocardiography and cardiac enzyme testing were normal, computed tomography of the chest with intravenous contrast medium was performed to evaluate her symptoms. This examination revealed a markedly abnormal diffuse dilation of the distal esophagus with an air fluid level in the upper thoracic esophagus. Upper gastrointestinal endoscopy, surprisingly, revealed a vivid discoloration extending from the posterior pharynx to the gastroesophageal junction. A large amount of fibrous bluish material was also present (arrow) that was thought to be a white fabric that had been dyed blue, as the esophageal mucosa had been. The bluish discoloration was most likely secondary to ingestion of Urelle tablets (containing methylene blue) that the patient was taking for her urinary symptoms. After successfully pushing the material into the stomach, we found that the bluish discoloration extended to the cardia. The circumstances surrounding the patient’s ingestion of the fabric remain unclear.

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