

of acute biliary obstruction. Medical management usually improves the patient's clinical status, providing a window of ~24 h during which biliary drainage should be established, typically by ERCP. Undue delay can result in recrudescence of overt sepsis and increased morbidity and mortality rates. In addition to Charcot's triad, the additional presence of shock and confusion (Reynolds's pentad) is associated with a high mortality rate and should prompt urgent intervention to restore biliary drainage.

Gallstone Pancreatitis Gallstones may cause acute pancreatitis as they pass through the ampulla of Vater. The occurrence of gallstone pancreatitis usually implies passage of a stone into the duodenum, and only ~20% of patients harbor a persistent stone in the ampulla or the common bile duct. Retained stones are more common in patients with jaundice, rising serum liver tests following hospitalization, severe pancreatitis, or superimposed ascending cholangitis.

Urgent ERCP decreases the morbidity rate of gallstone pancreatitis in a subset of patients with retained bile duct stones. It is unclear whether the benefit of ERCP is mainly attributable to treatment and prevention of ascending cholangitis or to relief of pancreatic ductal obstruction. ERCP is warranted early in the course of gallstone pancreatitis if ascending cholangitis is suspected, especially in a jaundiced patient. Urgent ERCP may also benefit patients predicted to have severe pancreatitis using a clinical index of severity, such as the Glasgow or Ranson score. Since the benefit of ERCP is limited to patients with a retained bile duct stone, a strategy of initial MRCP or EUS for diagnosis decreases the utilization of ERCP in gallstone pancreatitis and improves clinical outcomes by limiting the occurrence of ERCP-related adverse events.

ELECTIVE ENDOSCOPY

■ DYSPEPSIA

Dyspepsia is a chronic or recurrent burning discomfort or pain in the upper abdomen that may be caused by diverse processes, such as