

Clinical Features and High-risk Factors Prediction of Multiple Fiberoptic Bronchoscopy Therapy of Plastic Bronchitis in 269 Children

Tongqiang Zhang

Department of Respiratory Medicine, Tianjin Children's Hospital, Tianjin

Lihua Zhao

Department of Respiratory Medicine, Tianjin Children's Hospital, Tianjin

Jiafeng Zheng

Department of Respiratory Medicine, Tianjin Children's Hospital, Tianjin

Linsheng Zhao

Department of pathology, Tianjin Children's Hospital , tianjin

Xiaojian Cui

Department of Clinical Lab, Tianjin Children's Hospital, Tianjin

Yongsheng Xu

Department of Respiratory Medicine, Tianjin Children's Hospital, Tianjin

Chunquan Cai (✉ 15122656313@126.com)

Tianjin Institute of Pediatrics (Tianjin Key Laboratory of Birth Defects for Prevention and Treatment),
Tianjin Children's Hospital, Tianjin

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Abstract

Background. To analyze the clinical features of children with plastic bronchitis (PB) and identify the risk factors of multiple flexible fiberoptic bronchoscopy (FOB) therapy.

Methods. Retrospective analysis was performed on 269 PB children from 2016 to 2019, 144 cases were in single FOB group, 125 cases were in the multiple FOB group. The clinical manifestations, laboratory data, imaging findings and management were investigated. The different features were compared between the single FOB group and multiple FOB group.

Results. A total of 269 PB children were collected with a mean age of 6.7 ± 2.8 years. 257 (95.5%) cases were diagnosed as *Mycoplasma pneumoniae* (MP) infection. The mean duration of fever was 10.6 ± 3.7 days. All the patients presented with fever, and 62 (23.0%) suffered from hypoxemia, 144 (53.5%) had extrapulmonary complications. Higher levels of ESR, CRP, PCT, IL-6, LA, LDH, FER and D-dimer were observed. The proportion of pulmonary consolidation, segmental or lobar atelectasis, pleural effusion and pleural thickening were 97.4%, 46.5%, 47.9% and 63.2%, respectively. Furthermore, multivariate logistic regression analysis showed that $N\% >75.5\%$, $LDH >598.5U/L$, and $D-dimer >0.45mg/L$ were independent risk factors for multiple FOB therapy.

Conclusions. MP is a significant pathogen of PB in children. Patients with PB are more likely to suffer from persistent fever, excessive inflammation and severe radiological findings. $N\% >75.5\%$, $LDH >598.5U/L$ and $D-dimer > 0.45mg/L$ may be predictors of multiple FOB treatment.

1. Introduction

Plastic bronchitis (PB) is an uncommon pulmonary disease characterized by formation of bronchial casts (BCs) in airways, which can partially or completely obstruct the tracheobronchial tree[1]. Previously, PB was usually reported in children with surgically palliated congenital heart disease, especially those after the Fontan procedure[2]. With the wide application of fiberoptic bronchoscopy (FOB) in bronchopulmonary disease, accumulating evidence indicated that PB can be triggered by common pathogens of respiratory tract infection including influenza virus (A and B), adenovirus (ADV) and *Mycoplasma pneumoniae* (MP) [3–7], suggesting that PB may not be a rare disease.

The clinical manifestations of PB include repeated fever, shortness of breath and can rapidly progress to acute dyspnea and even life-threatening respiratory failure [8, 9]. As PB is a serious disease which can endanger lives without timely management, we explored and analyzed the clinical characteristics, laboratory examinations, imaging features and management of 269 children with PB to help clinicians recognize it in time and apply effective treatment promptly. To the best of our knowledge, this study is the largest research of PB in children and is the first study to identify risk factors of multiple FOB therapy in PB patients.

2. Subjects And Methods

2.1 Study population

We collected and analyzed the medical records and chest radiographic findings of 269 children with PB, who were admitted to Respiratory Department of Tianjin Children's Hospital from January 2016 to December 2019.

All the cases received FOB and bronchoalveolar lavage (BAL) procedure. If the fever does not subside, and the chest X-ray does not improve 2-3 days after the first FOB operation, the patient will receive multiple FOB and BAL treatments. Subjects were divided into the single FOB group and multiple group (≥ 2 times) according to the times of FOB treatment. The diagnosis of PB was determined according to discovery of inflammatory BCs by FOB, and further confirmed by pathology. Hypoxemia was defined as any recorded oxygen saturation of $< 92\%$ by pulse oximetry, measured on room air[10]. MP infection is determined by serologic or MP polymerase chain reaction (PCR) tests. An MP-immunoglobulin M (IgM) titer $\geq 1:160$ or four-fold rising titer in acute and convalescent serum specimens were considered positive[11].

Inclusion criteria : (1) All patients had an acute onset of fever and cough. (2) All patients met the criteria of type I PB confirmed by histopathology. Exclusion criteria: (1) patients who had underlying disease, such as congenital heart disease, asthma and congenital immunodeficiency disease. (2) patients who had history of inhalation of foreign body and confirmed by FOB as bronchial foreign body. (3) Patients who had incomplete medical records.

2.2 Methods

The study was performed in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki and approved by the ethics committee of the Tianjin Children's Hospital. The ethics committee waived the need for written informed consent provided by participants due to the retrospective nature of the study, because all patient data were analyzed anonymously, and no additional informed consent was required.

Clinical characteristics, laboratory findings, imaging features, and management of the 269 patients were collected at the time of admission.

Peripheral blood samples were also obtained on admission for the determination of blood routine examination, erythrocyte sedimentation rate(ESR), C-reactive protein (CRP), procalcitonin (PCT), interleukin (IL)-6, lactic acid(LA), lactic dehydrogenase (LDH), alanine aminotransferase (ALT), aspartate aminotransferase (AST), ferritin (FER), D- dimer, fibrinogen (FG) and specific antibody to MP. Blood routine examination was performed every 2–3 days and was compared between at admission and at discharge. Chest computed tomography (CT) was performed before admission or during hospitalization as these patients showed persistent fever or large infiltration on chest X-ray.

All the patients enrolled in our study received FOB, and the fluid of BAL were collected for microbiological determination according to the *Guide to pediatric bronchoscopy* [12]. Virus were identified by direct immunofluorescence PCR, MP using PCR and bacteria were detected by culture or multiplex PCR for respiratory bacteria pathogens.

The study was performed in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki and approved by the ethics committee of the Tianjin Children's Hospital. The ethics committee waived the need for written informed consent provided by participants due to the retrospective nature of the study, because all patient data were analyzed anonymously, and no additional informed consent was required.

2.3 Data analysis

Datas were processed using SPSS 26.0. Continuous variables were expressed as mean \pm standard deviation (SD) or median values (interquartile range) and assessed by independent group *t* tests or Mann-Whitney *U* test. Categorical variables were expressed as percentage (%) and assessed by Chi-squared tests or Fisher's exact test. Receiver Operating Characteristic (ROC) curves and Logistic regression analysis were performed to identify variables associated with multiple FOB therapy in PB patients. A two-sided α less than 0.05 were considered as statistically significant.

3. Results

3.1 Detection rate of PB and its distribution in different seasons.

Among 4958 children of pneumonia with FOB and BAL therapy, 269 subjects were diagnosed as PB from 2016 to 2019. The annual cases of PB was 30, 42, 67 and 130, respectively, while the annual cases of pneumonia with FOB and BAL for adjuvant therapy was 818, 858, 1471 and 1811. The detection rate of PB in pneumonia was 3.7%, 4.9%, 4.6% and 7.2%, respectively (2016 to 2019) (Fig. 1). The seasonal distribution of PB from 2016 to 2019 was shown in Fig. 2 and the peak incidence was observed in 2019 winter.

3.2 Etiological distribution in 269 children with PB.

In terms of etiology in the 269 PB children, no clear pathogen was detected in 6 cases and the positive detection rate was 97.8% (263/269), coinfections were detected in 20.4% (55/269). Among single pathogen infection, MP was the most predominant pathogen (75.1%, 202/269), followed by influenza virus (0.7%, 2/269), *Candida albicans* (0.7%, 2/269), ADV (0.4%, 1/269) and *Streptococcus pneumoniae* (0.4%, 1/269). Of these 55 cases with combined infection, coinfection of MP and *Streptococcus pneumoniae* was the most, with a infection rate of 8.6% (23/269), followed by coinfection of MP and ADV

(3.3%, 9/269), MP and influenza virus (3.3%, 9/269), MP and Staphylococcus (3.0%, 8/269), MP and Acinetobacter baumannii (1.5%, 4/269), MP and Haemophilus influenzae(0.7%, 2/269). (Table 1)

Table 1
The aetiological distribution in 269 children with PB

pathogens	patients (n)	infection rate(%)
MP	202	75.1
Candida albicans	2	0.7
Influenzae	2	0.7
ADV	1	0.4
Streptococcus	1	0.4
no clear pathogens	6	2.2
MP + Staphylococcus	8	3.0
MP + Streptococcus	23	8.6
MP + Acinetobacter baumannii	4	1.5
MP + Haemophilus influenzae	2	0.7
MP + ADV	9	3.3
MP + Influenzae	9	3.3

3.3 Clinical characteristics of PB in children.

The mean age of the subjects was 6.7 ± 2.8 years (range, 9 months-14 years), and the male-to-female ratio was 1.04. The mean duration of fever and hospitalization was 10.6 ± 3.7 and 9.3 ± 3.2 days, respectively. All the patients presented with cough and fever, and 62 (23.0%) cases suffered from hypoxemia. Of these 269 patients, 3 (1.1%) had pulmonary embolism, 15 (5.6%) cases was diagnosed as necrotizing pneumonia, and 144 (53.5%) had extrapulmonary complications, including 16(5.9%) with leukopenia, 62(23%) with digestive system abnormalities (nausea, vomiting, elevated transaminase), 24(8.9%) with cardiovascular system abnormalities (elevated myocardial enzymes, abnormal electrocardiograph(ECG), pericardial effusion and cardiac thrombosis), 40(14.9%) with rash, 21(7.8%) with toxic encephalopathy, and 27(10%) with electrolyte disorder.

Among these 269 patients, 144 cases underwent FOB and BAL procedure for once(the single group) and 125 underwent multiple therapy (the multiple group). There were no statistically differences between the two groups in age, sex ratio, incidence of fever. Compared with single group, children in the multiple group exhibited higher peak body temperature, longer duration of fever and hospitalization. The total incidence

of extrapulmonary complications was higher in the multiple group, especially in digestive system, however differences in incidence of blood system, cardiovascular system, skin, central nervous system and electrolyte disorder were not observed. (Table 2)

Table 2
Clinical characteristics of PB in children

Clinical characteristics	Patients (n = 269)	Patients with single FOB (n = 144)	Patients with multiple FOB (n = 125)	P
Age, years	6.7 ± 2.8	6.5 ± 3.0	6.9 ± 2.5	0.301
Sex(male/female)	137/132	70/74	67/58	0.414
Fever (n,%)	269(100%)	144(100%)	125(100%)	1.000
Cough (n, %)	269(100%)	144(100%)	125(100%)	1.000
Peak body temperature, °C	40.0 ± 0.6	39.9 ± 0.6	40.2 ± 0.6	0.001
Duration of fever, days	10.6 ± 3.7	9.7 ± 3.3	11.6 ± 3.9	0.000
Duration of hospitalization, days	9.3 ± 3.2	8.1 ± 2.6	10.7 ± 3.3	0.000
Hypoxemia (n,%)	42(15.6%)	7(4.9%)	35(28%)	0.000
Pulmonary embolism (n,%)	3(1.1%)	0(0%)	3(2.4%)	0.062
Necrotizing pneumonia (n,%)	15(5.6%)	4(2.8%)	11(8.8%)	0.032
Complications of extrapulmonary (n,%)	170(63.2%)	81(56.3%)	89(71.2%)	0.011
Blood system (n,%)	16(5.9%)	9(6.3%)	7(5.6%)	0.822
Digestive system (n,%)	62(23%)	26(18.1%)	36(28.8%)	0.037
Cardiovascular system (n,%)	24(8.9%)	10(6.9%)	14(11.2%)	0.222
Rash (n,%)	40(14.9%)	22(15.3%)	18(14.4%)	0.840
Central nervous system (n,%)	21(7.8%)	6(5.6%)	10(10.4%)	0.140
Electrolyte disorder (n,%)	27(10%)	10(6.9%)	17(13.7%)	0.067
Data are presented as mean ± SD, or n (%). Differences between groups were determined by independent group <i>t</i> tests(mean) and Chi-squared tests or Fisher exact test (proportions).				

3.4 Laboratory characteristics of PB in children.

Laboratory indicators were summarized in Table 3. Higher levels of ESR, CRP, PCT, IL-6, LA, LDH, FER and D-dimer were observed in PB patients. The levels of N%, CRP, IL-6, LA, ALT, AST, LDH, FER, D-dimer in multiple group were higher than those in the single group, and the differences were statistically significant (all, $P < 0.05$). (Table 3)

Table 3
laboratory characteristics of PB in children

Laboratory information	Patients (n = 269)	Patients with single FOB (n = 144)	Patients with multiple FOB (n = 125)	P
WBC($\times 10^9/L$)	8.6 \pm 4.4	8.2 \pm 4.4	9.1 \pm 4.5	0.108
N%	71.2 \pm 11.5	67.7 \pm 11.7	75.2 \pm 9.9	0.000
L%	21.1 \pm 9.6	23.9 \pm 10.1	17.9 \pm 7.7	0.000
PLT($\times 10^9/L$)	263.4 \pm 88.8	260 \pm 98.2	265.9 \pm 76.2	0.592
ESR, mm/h	30.0(21.0-42.3)	30.0(22.0-41.5)	29.0(21.0-44.0)	0.800
CRP, mg/L	39.4(19.0-76.0)	31.4(16.2-62.4)	58.3(29.8-86.2)	0.003
PCT, ng/ml	0.25(0.12-0.65)	0.20(0.10-0.49)	0.35(0.15-0.86)	0.001
IL-6, pg/ml	42.4(24.2-79.2)	38.1(20.6-71.1)	52.6(30.4-92.9)	0.010
LA, mol/l	2.67(2.11-3.29)	2.52(2.07-3.15)	2.76(2.25-3.43)	0.047
AST, U/L	39.0(30.0-58.0)	36.0(29.0-54.0)	43.0(31.0-61.0)	0.033
ALT, U/L	17.0(13.0-34.0)	15.0(12.0-26.0)	21.0(13.0-38.8)	0.018
LDH, U/L	532.0(396.0-706.0)	460.0(358.5-573.8)	625.0(460.0-809.0)	0.000
FER, ng/L	157.1(79.2-311.2)	106.0(63.9-193.3)	233.8(121.6-412.1)	0.000
FG, g/L	4.2(3.5-4.6)	4.2(3.5-4.6)	4.2(3.4-4.6)	0.896
D-dimer, mg/L	0.3(0.2-0.8)	0.2(0.1-0.5)	0.5(0.2-1.1)	0.000
Data are presented as mean \pm SD and median (25th-75th percentile). Differences between groups were determined by the independent group <i>t</i> tests(mean \pm SD) and Mann-Whitney <i>U</i> test (medians). WBC White blood cell, N Peripheral neutrophils, L Peripheral lymphocytes, PLT Platelets, ESR Erythrocyte sedimentation rate, CRP C-reactive protein, PCT Procalcitonin, IL-6 Interleukin (IL)-6, LA Lactic acid, AST Aspartate aminotransferase, ALT Alanine aminotransferase, LDH Lactic dehydrogenase, FER Ferritin, FG Fibrinogen.				

3.5 Imaging characteristics of PB in children.

All the 269 enrolled patients underwent chest CT scan and 262 (97.4%) showed pulmonary consolidation, 125 (46.5%) had segmental or lobar atelectasis, 127 (47.9%) with pleural effusion and 170 (63.2%) with pleural thickening. The incidence of pulmonary consolidation and pleural effusion were higher in multiple group (100% vs 95.1%, 56.8% vs 38.9%, respectively, $P < 0.05$). However, there was no difference in the incidence of segmental or lobar atelectasis and pleural thickening between the two groups. (Table 4)

Table 4
Imaging characteristics of PB in children.

Imaging features	Patients (n = 269)	Patients with single FOB (n = 144)	Patients with multiple FOB (n = 125)	P
Consolidation (n,%)	262(97.4%)	137(95.1%)	125(100%)	0.012
Atelectasis (n,%)	125(46.5%)	64(44.4%)	61(48.8%)	0.475
Pleural effusion (n,%)	127(47.9%)	56(38.9%)	71(56.8%)	0.003
Pleural thickening (n,%)	170(63.2%)	89(61.8%)	81(64.8%)	0.612
Data are presented as <i>n</i> (%). Differences between groups were determined by Chi-squared tests				

3.6 Management of PB in children

All the patients had been administrated with at least one type of antibiotics before admission. 269 subjects were prescribed anti-MP antibiotics empirically, among which 197 (73.3%) were treated with Macrolides, 52 (19.3%) with Doxycycline, 20 (7.4%) with Quinolones. Combination of antibiotics, including anti-MP and anti-bacteria or anti-influenza virus were applied to 261 (97%) subjects. 257 (95.5%) cases received oral or intravenous glucocorticoid, 55 (20.4%) received intravenous immunoglobulin (IVIG), 48 (17.8%) were admitted to intensive care unit(ICU) and 35 (13%) received mechanical ventilation. The multiple group exhibited a higher proportion of glucocorticoid and IVIG therapy compared to the single group (98.4% vs 92.4%, 27.2% vs 14.6%, respectively, $P < 0.05$). FOB and BAL was used to remove mucus plug and BCs. All the patients were discharged without mortality. (Table 5)

Table 5**Management of PB in children**

Management	Patients (n = 269)	Patients with single FOB (n = 144)	Patients with multiple FOB (n = 125)	P
Macrolides (n,%)	269(100%)	144(100%)	125(100%)	1.000
Combined application of antibiotics (n,%)	261(97%)	138(95.8%)	123(98.4%)	0.216
Glucocorticoid (n,%)	257(95.5%)	133(92.4%)	123(98.4%)	0.021
IVIg (n,%)	55(20.4%)	21(14.6%)	34(27.2%)	0.010
Admission to ICU (n,%)	12(4.5%)	8(5.6%)	4(3.2%)	0.351
Mechanical ventilation (n,%)	35(13.0%)	11(9.7%)	24(16.8%)	0.085

Data are presented as *n* (%). Differences between groups were determined by Chi-squared tests

3.7 Risk factors for patients with multiple FOB therapy

Univariate analysis identified peak body temperature, duration of fever and hospitalization, hypoxemia, complications of extrapulmonary, presence of pleural effusion, higher level of inflammation indicators and D-dimer as significant related factors for multiple FOB. ROC analysis revealed that N%, LDH and D-dimer were of great significance in identifying subjects required multiple FOB. The cutoff values for these three variables were 75.5%, 598.5U/L and 0.45mg/L with maximum sensitivities and specificities. To adjust for the influence of confounders, multivariate logistic regression analysis was performed, and results showed that N%, LDH and D-dimer were independent risk factors for multiple FOB with the odds ratio (OR) values of 3.777, 2.729 and 2.272, respectively. (Table 6)

Table 6
Multivariate logistic regression analysis for factors in patients with multiple FOB therapy

Variable	B	S.E.	Wald	P-value	OR	95%CI	
						Lower	Upper
N > 75.5%	1.329	0.31	18.427	0.000	3.777	2.059	6.930
LDH > 598.5U/L	1.004	0.335	8.974	0.003	2.729	1.415	5.263
DD > 0.45mg/L	0.821	0.317	6.721	0.01	2.272	1.222	4.226

4. Discussion

In recent 10 years, an increasing number of studies about PB in children associated with respiratory infections are being reported [3–7]. However, many literatures on PB and BCs are composed of case reports or small case series, and accurate epidemiological data of PB and BCs are still lacking. Lu S et al. [6] reported 22 cases of BCs among 161 MPP children with FOB and BAL treatment from November 2015 to December 2016. Wei F et al. [13] analyzed a study of 63 PB children associated with influenza virus from May 2014 to April 2020. In the study, we identified 269 children with PB from 4958 cases of pneumonia with FOB and BAL treatment, and we estimated that PB accounted for 5.4% in children with pneumonia requiring FOB.

We identified that MP, bacteria, influenza virus, ADV and *Candida albicans* can trigger PB. In recent years, PB associated with MP has been reported in various studies. In an investigation enrolled 15 children with PB, MP infection accounted for 86.7% of the cases [4]. Guo et al. also identified that in a study of 73 subjects with type I PB, MP infection was detected in 90.4% of the children [14]. In the present study which is the largest research to date of PB, MP was positive in 257 (95.5%) patients, including single MP infection in 202 (75.1%) cases and coinfection of MP with bacteria and/or virus in 55 (20.4%) subjects. Moreover, the seasonal distribution of PB from 2016 to 2019 indicated that the peak incidence of PB was observed in winter, especially in 2019 winter. Yan X also [15] demonstrated that MPP had a higher prevalence rate in winter and peaks occurred in November 2019 in a 3-year retrospective analysis from Bei Jing. The considerable detection rate of MP in PB and epidemic consistency of PB and MPP indicated that MP is a prominent pathogen of PB. MPP is usually considered to be self-limited and benign [16], however it may proceed to severe or fulminant pneumonia, endanger the lives [17, 18]. Previous studies [6, 19, 20] also showed that MP infection can lead to varying degrees of respiratory mucus plug, even BCs, resulting in PB. The mechanism of its role in PB maybe that MP infection not only directly cause damage to the airway, including epithelial necrosis to block the respiratory tract and cilia shedding to cause cilia removal dysfunction, but also promote airway hypersecretion by the excessive inflammation [21, 22]. Compared with bacterial and viral infections, MP infection is more likely to induce excessive inflammatory response in the body [23] which can induce continuous formation of mucus plug in the airway and cause damage to the whole body.

The mean age of our patients was 6.7 ± 2.8 years (range, 9 months-14 years) which was similar to the 6.1 ± 2.8 years reported in previous study [14]. The clinical manifestations of PB are diverse, including fever, cough, dyspnea or respiratory distress and damage to extrapulmonary system, among which rapid progression to hypoxemia can be applied as a strong indicator of PB. However, when patients with mild symptoms have no or mild signs of hypoxemia, many clinicians cannot recognize it. In our study, 62 (23.0%) cases suffered from hypoxemia. Li W et al. [18] revealed that in their study all the 15 children with PB showed no signs of hypoxemia, and Lu S et al. [6] reported that only 9 out of 22 children with MPP BCs received oxygen therapy. All the above suggested that hypoxemia was not sensitive enough to discover PB. Therefore, we should comprehensively evaluate the clinical manifestations in order to recognize PB timely.

The incidence of ICU treatment in our study was 17.8% (48/269 cases), which was lower than that of 58.3% (14/24 cases) in Lu et al's study[24], and no death cases were observed in our study. The rate of critically ill and mortality was significantly lower than previous descriptions[8, 25]. The possible explanation may be attributed to the following two aspects. On one hand, the clinical manifestation of PB depends on the location and degree of bronchial obstruction, ranging from fragmented partial BCs to a large and complete cast that fills the entire airway[6]. On the other hand, rapid FOB treatment contributed to early effective intervention and prevented the development of respiratory failure.

We found that patients in the multiple group exhibited severe clinical manifestations, including higher peak body temperature, longer duration of fever and hospitalization, higher incidence of intra and extra-pulmonary complications, higher levels of inflammation indicators and D-dimer. Furthermore, multiple logistic regression identified that N% >75.5%, LDH > 598.5U/L and D-dimer > 0.45mg/l were the independent risk factors for multiple FOB therapy. It was reported that higher neutrophil(63.1%) was positively correlated with excessive inflammation and disease severity[26] in children with MPP. LDH is a nonspecific inflammatory biomarker and exists within the cytoplasm. Xu et al.[27] identified LDH as independent risk factor for mucus plug formation in children with RMPP and our results showed that LDH > 598.5U/L is a predictor of multiple FOB therapy. Although the pathogenesis of PB was not completely clear, at present it is commonly believed that PB triggered by infection result from inappropriate immune reponse to infection and direct damage of pathogen to the airway[3, 28].The higher level of inflammation biomarkers indicate the excessive inflammation, which can lead to continuous formation of mucus plug, resulting in multiple FOB to clear the subsequent BCs.

The increase of D-dimer is an important indicator of high fibrinolysis, representing blood hypercoagulability and the presence of thrombi [29]. It was reported [30]that the D-dimer level in the severe MPP group was higher than that in the mild group in children(0.61 vs.0.30mg/L), and the level of D-dimer was positively correlated with the severity of MPP. In the study, we found an elevated D-dimer level in PB children and D-dimer > 0.45mg/l was a risk factor for multiple FOB and BAL treatments, which was consistent with the view of Zhang et al[31]. Their study showed that children receiving multiple FOB treatments for RMPP had higher D-dimmer levels (1.808 mg/L) compared with the monotherapy group (0.567mg/L). However, the median level of D-dimer in our study was lower than that of Zhang et al and we speculated that there are two possible explanations. On one hand, the enrolled subjects in the two study were different. RMPP children may exhibit higher D-dimmer level duo to intensive body reponse to MP infection. On the other hand, in the present study, D-dimer level of a significant number of children may not be measured at the peak of disease process. In summary, we speculated that hypercoagulability play an important role in inducing subsequent mucus plugs formation of PB and higher D-dimer level is an important risk factor for patients requiring multiple FOB treatments.

The imaging features of children with PB were diverse, including pulmonary consolidation, atelectasis, pleural effusion, emphysema and pneumothorax[14, 32]. Recent literature [18] found that 13 out of 15 PB children had lung consolidation involved unilateral or bilateral infiltration, and 5 cases developed pleural effusion. Lu S et al.[6] also observed that all 22 children with BCs had lobar consolidation and 6 cases

developed atelectasis. Our results showed that the imaging manifestations of PB were not specific, and PB patients were more likely to be associated with lung consolidation (97.4%), which was consistent with the 98.6% of PB children with lung consolidation or atelectasis reported previously[14]. Therefore, we concluded that PB should be considered when patients with persistent fever and large chest imaging infiltration.

Although PB presented with severe clinical manifestations and the critical form in children has a mortality rate as high as 7–10% due to failing to extract BCs in time[8, 9, 25], the prognosis of PB is generally favorable if the disease can be treated promptly. Most reports [4, 6] of effective therapy were based on standard antibiotic treatment, glucocorticoids, IVIG and clearance of BCs with FOB. In agreement with this notion, all patients in the present study received appropriate antibiotic treatment, up to 95.5% subjects received glucocorticoid therapy, and 20.4% received IVIG to modulate immunity. FOB procedure is of prominent efficacy in treatment of PB, including direct clearance of BCs to improve lung ventilation, the clearance of various inflammatory factors and easy access to the lower airway for the pathogenic detection. Recent studies [33, 34] found that compared with late FOB therapy, FOB therapy during the early disease process in RMPP patients with large pulmonary lesions resulted in faster recovery of clinical and inflammation characters and shorter hospital stay. Furthermore, there are a considerable number of children with PB requiring multiple FOB therapy. In our study, the proportion of patients in multiple group was 46.5% (125/269) which was consistent with the result of Cai L[35]. Their study showed that more than 50% children with PB received multiple FOB treatment and all achieved favorable prognosis. In summary, we believed that in patients with persistent fever, higher level of inflammation indicators and large infiltration in chest imaging, FOB is of great significance in timely diagnosis and effective treatment.

There were several limitations to this study. Firstly, it was a retrospective study and there may have been some selection bias. Secondly the patients were enrolled from a single center and the results may not easily extrapolate to patients admitted to other regions. Thirdly, to timely identify PB and avoid improper application of FOB, a RCT study should be designed between PB and such diseases.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, our study shows that MP is a significant pathogen of PB. The clinical manifestations of PB are not specific, children with PB might be easier to suffer from persistent fever, excessive inflammation and severe radiological findings. N% >75.5%, LDH >598.5U/L and D-dimer >0.45mg/L are important risk factors for multiple FOB procedures. Favorable prognosis can be expected with timely diagnosis and appropriate FOB treatment.

Abbreviations

PB (plastic bronchitis), FOB (fiberoptic bronchoscopy), MP (*Mycoplasma pneumoniae*), BCs (bronchial casts), ADV (adenovirus), BAL (bronchoalveolar lavage), PCR (polymerase chain reaction), ESR (erythrocyte sedimentation rate), CRP (C-reactive protein), PCT (procalcitonin), IL-6 (interleukin), LA (lactic

acid), LDH(lactic dehydrogenase), ALT (alanine aminotransferase), AST (aspartate aminotransferase), FER (ferritin), FG (fibrinogen) CT (Chest computed tomography), IVIG (intravenous immunoglobulin), ICU (intensive care unit), MPP (Mycoplasma pneumoniae pneumonia), RMPP (refractory Mycoplasma pneumoniae pneumonia), ROC (Receiver Operating Characteristic).

Declarations

Ethics approval and consent to participate

All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were performed in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki and approved by the ethics committee of the Tianjin Children's Hospital. The ethics committee waived the need for written informed consent provided by participants due to the retrospective nature of the study, because all patient data were analyzed anonymously, and no additional informed consent was required.

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Consent for publication.

Not applicable.

Availability of data and materials.

The datasets used and/or analysed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

Competing interests.

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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Author contributions.

All authors contributed to the intellectual content of this manuscript and approved the final manuscript as submitted. (I) Conception and design: CQC and XJC; (II) Collection, assembly of data: TQZ and LHZ; (III) Administrative support: YSX; (IV) Data analysis and interpretation: JFZ and LSZ; (V) Search literatures: JFZ; (VI) Manuscript writing: All authors; (VII) Final approval of manuscript: All authors.

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Figures

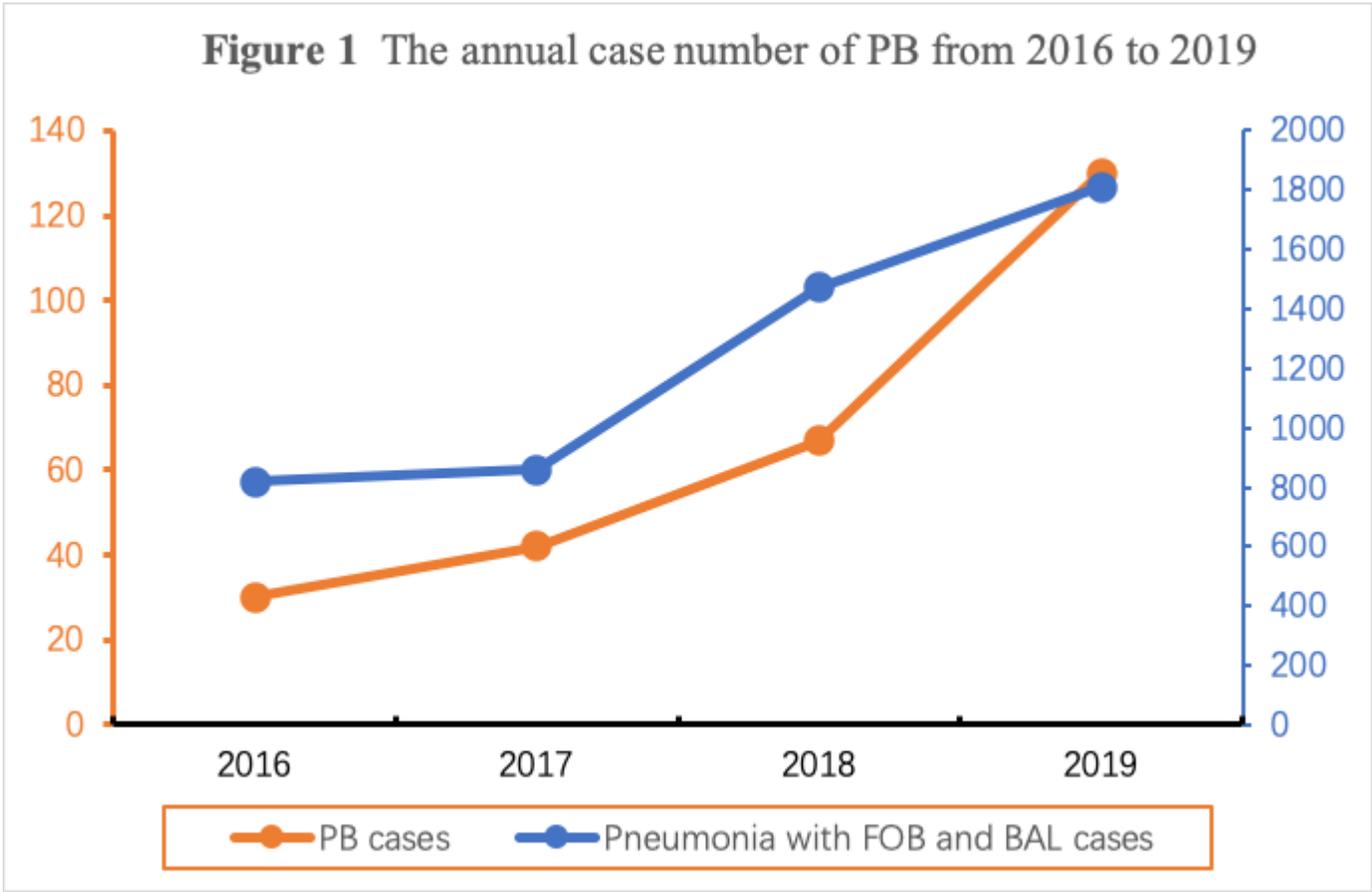


Figure 1

The annual case number of PB from 2016 to 2019

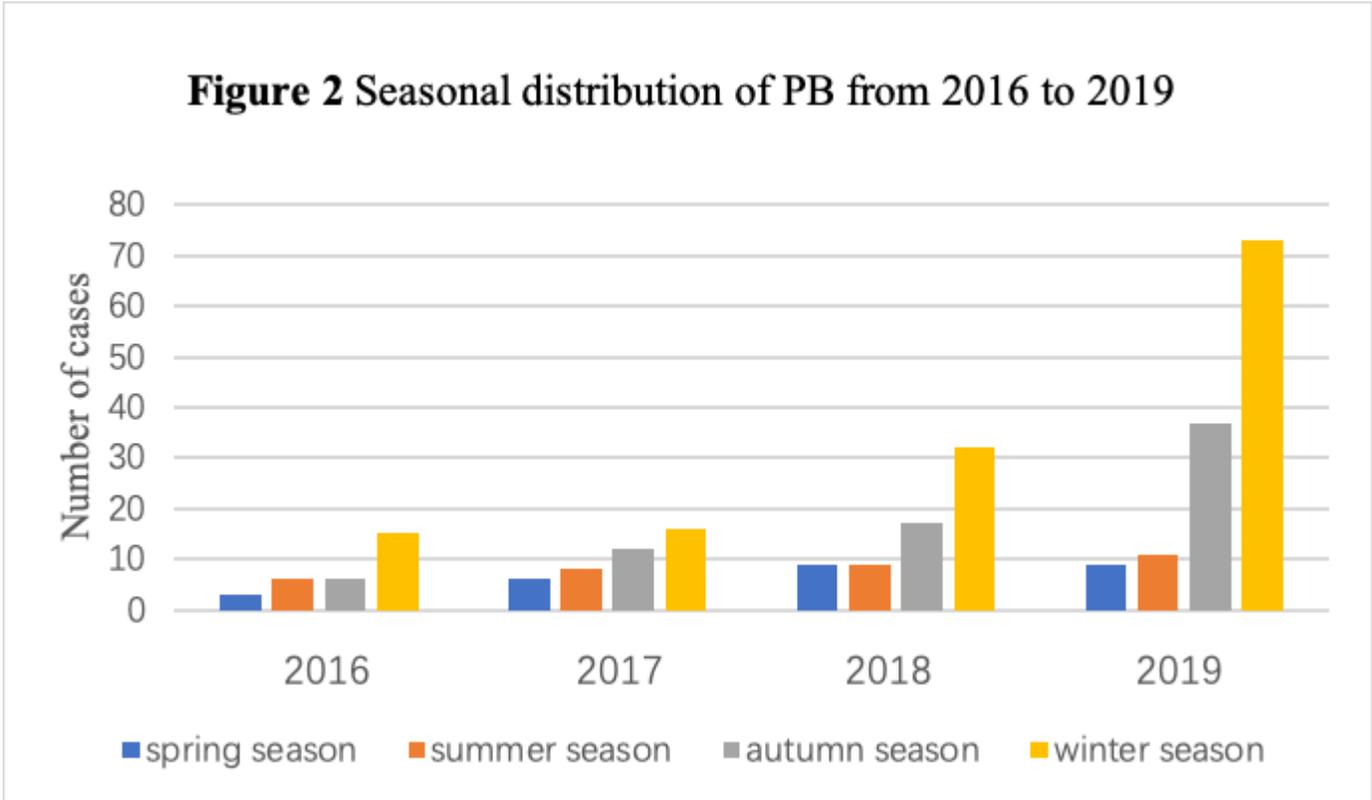


Figure 2

Seasonal distribution of PB from 2016 to 2019