Vignette 44: Biliary Obstruction After Eating Dirt

A 21-year-old man is referred for ERCP in the setting of recurrent biliary colic. He emigrated from El Salvador 1 year ago and, upon careful questioning, acknowledged episodes of pica with eating dirt. He initially presented 8 months prior to this visit with classic biliary colic, and he similarly presented again 2 months before the current visit. He is now asymptomatic and does not report any GI symptoms, including fever, chills, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, or change in bowel habits. Physical examination is significant only for an enlarged liver. Labs include the following: hemoglobin = 15.7, AST = 92, ALT = 72, ALP = 113, total bilirubin = 1.8. Pre-ERCP ultrasonography revealed a liver span of 19.9 cm, diffuse fatty infiltration, tortuous tracks through the liver parenchyma, and a common bile duct dilated at 11 mm. There were multiple echogenic foci in the gallbladder and common bile duct. ERCP with sphincterotomy did not show stones, but instead revealed multiple flat parasites, as pictured in Figures 44-1 and 44-2.

What is the diagnosis?

How should this be treated?

Figure 44-1. Flat parasites in the duodenum. (Reprinted with permission of Stanley Dea, MD, Olive-View UCLA Medical Center.)

Figure 44-2. Flat parasites collected from patient after ERCP. (Reprinted with permission of Stanley Dea, MD, Olive-View UCLA Medical Center.)