

A red blanket above the heart

Una manta roja sobre el corazón

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In surgical practice, the evolution of a hemopericardium beyond its acute phase is infrequent, especially when most of these conditions have a traumatic cause. In one way or another, the clinic usually triggers two antagonistic events: the patient dies due to cardiac tamponade or is treated satisfactorily, by pericardiocentesis or thoracotomy with limited access to the middle mediastinum. In any case, once access to the pericardial space is achieved and the heart is examined, there is practically no remaining evidence on its surface –except perhaps the obvious hematoma found on Morgagni's table– due to recent accumulation of blood inside. For these reasons, it is rare to observe –literally– in all its splendor the repercussion of a «chronic» hemopericardium on the heart of a living individual. The image presented shows the deposition and, presumably, the subsequent impregnation of red blood cells contained in a pericardial effusion, on the epicardium of a patient

with possible tumor metastasis. The patient, aged 70, was operated on urgently for a pericardial effusion with hemodynamic compromise, presumably caused by tumor invasion of the pericardium, but without having been able to confirm this diagnosis, nor the characteristics of the fluid contained. For drainage, a subxiphoid approach was initially attempted using the Parsonet technique, but the unstable clinical conditions of the patient, together with the cardiodepressive effect of anesthesia, caused the appearance of cardiorespiratory arrest. Attempts were made to reverse it with external cardiac massage, without success, and finally, it was decided to perform an emergency median longitudinal sternotomy, followed by rapid opening of the pericardium with evacuation of a large amount of blood, and spontaneous restoration of the patient's heart rhythm; which evolved later without mediate complications. If the initial planned approach had been carried out, it would not have been possible to capture the curious image shown here (**Figure and Video in supplementary material**): an organ completely covered and impregnated with fibrin and clots, which when trying to remove them caused profuse bleeding of the epicardial surface. So it was decided to leave unchanged this red «blanket» over the heart.

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