

# Acute Severe Euvolemic Hyponatremia Caused by Segmental Pulmonary Thromboembolism and Complicated by COVID-19 Infection: A Case Report

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## SUMMARY

Hyponatremia is frequently encountered in clinical practice. Euvolemic hyponatremia (syndrome of inadequate antidiuresis, SIAD) represents diagnostic and management challenges regarding etiology unraveling, gradual acute substitution, and later causal treatment. Here we present a case of severe SIAD caused by segmental pulmonary thromboembolism and manifested as acute psychosis. COVID-19 complicated the course of the disease acquired in hospital settings. By simultaneous treatment of pulmonary thromboembolism, gradual substitution of hyponatremia, and treatment of COVID-19, the patient completely recovered biochemically and mentally. Even experienced clinicians are confused about diverse clinical manifestation of SIAD. Attentive correction of hyponatremia and treatment of its etiology are the mainstays of SIAD management.

## KEYWORDS

*Hyponatremia; Hypertonic saline; Pulmonary thromboembolism*

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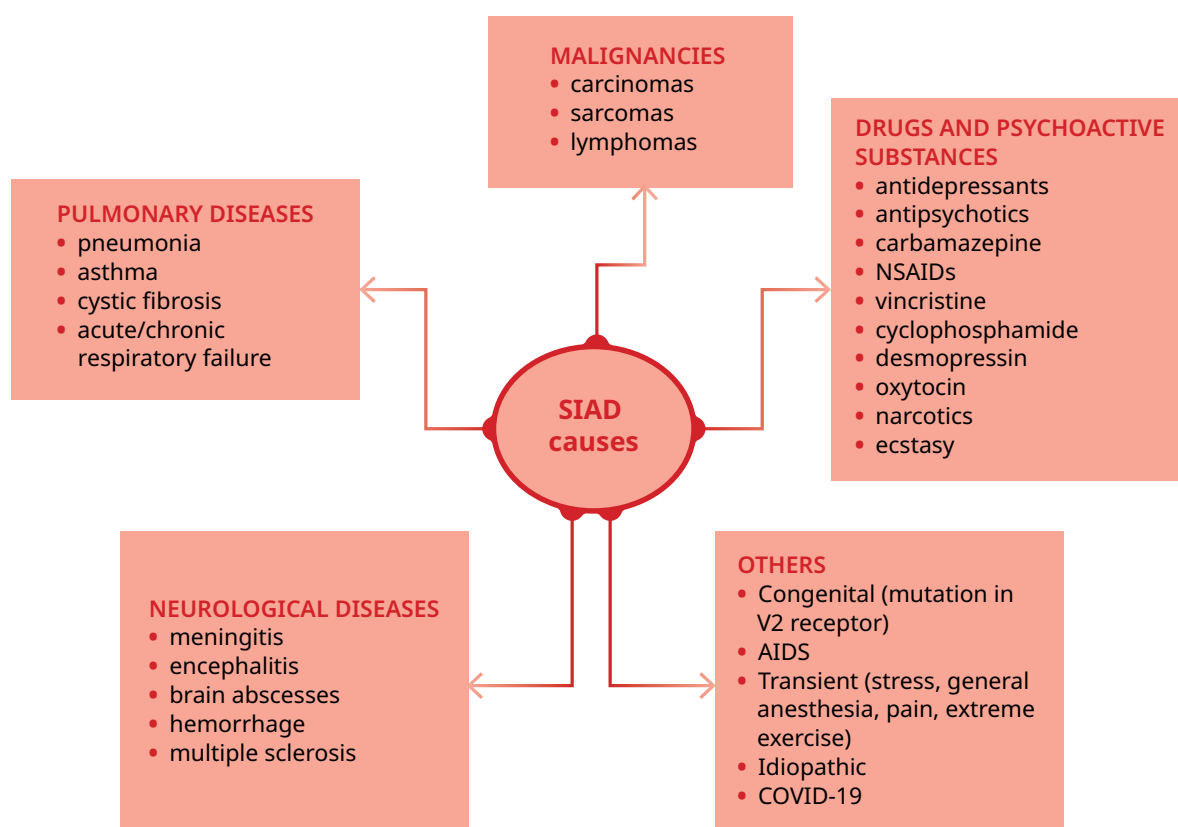


## Introduction

Hyponatremia is an electrolyte disorder that is often encountered in clinical practice. It is defined as a condition where the sodium level is  $<135$  mEq/L. Sodium ions, as the main extracellular cations, significantly determine osmolarity of the plasma. Therefore, the disorder of serum sodium concentration is at the same time a disorder of plasma osmolarity. Normal values of sodium concentration in adult serum are 137-146 mmol/L<sup>1-3</sup>.

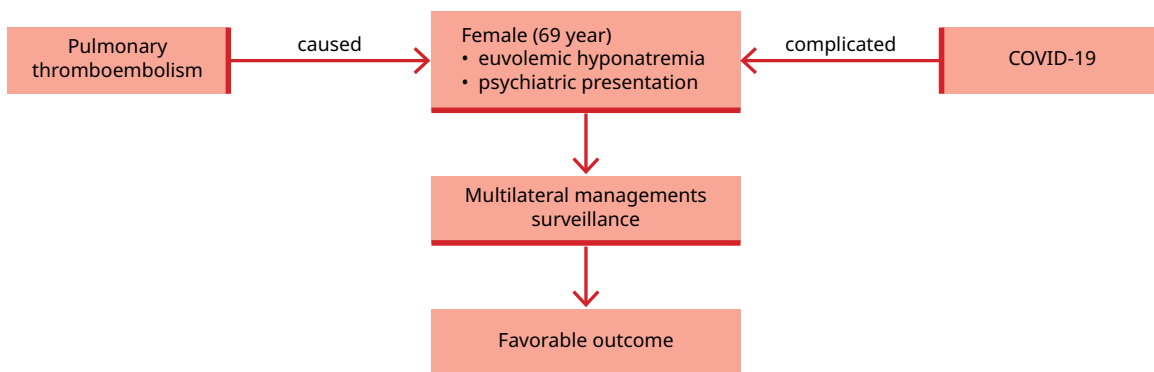
The first step in evaluating hyponatremia is assessing patient volume status (presumably by clinical estimation of hypervolemia, normovolemia, or hypovolemia). The syndrome of inadequate

antidiuresis (SIAD) is a syndrome of euvolemic hyponatremia, characterized by permanently altered secretion of antidiuretic hormone (ADH) and excretion of concentrated urine ( $>100$  mOsm/kg) despite serum hypoosmolarity (275 mOsm/kg), natriuresis  $>30$  mmol/day, and absence of renal, adrenal, or thyroid insufficiency<sup>4,5</sup>. The causes of SIAD are illustrated in Figure 1, while differential diagnosis of hyponatremia is shown in Table 1<sup>3,6,7</sup>. Hyponatremia usually becomes clinically manifest with a sodium level of  $<125$  mmol/L<sup>8</sup>. It is most commonly presented by neurological and digestive symptoms such as headache, nausea, vomiting, confusion, incontinence, aggression, arrhythmias, and, less often, convulsions and coma<sup>8-10</sup>. Treatment of



**Fig. 1.** Causes of the syndrome of inadequate antidiuresis.

AIDS = acquired immune deficiency syndrome; SIAD = syndrome of inadequate antidiuresis; COVID-19 = coronavirus disease caused by SARS-CoV-2 virus; NSAIDs = non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs



**FIG. 2.** Pulmonary thromboembolism-induced syndrome of inadequate antidiuresis complicated by COVID-19.

SIAD includes careful correction of hyponatremia with treatment of the causative disease<sup>8, 11-14</sup>. One should have in mind that too rapid correction of hyponatremia can lead to pontine myelinolysis<sup>15</sup>.

This article presents a patient with euvolemic hyponatremia caused by segmental pulmonary thromboembolism (PTE) complicated by COVID-19 (Fig. 2).

### Case report

A 69-year-old female was initially treated at the Department of Endocrinology, Division of Neuroendocrinology, Clinical Center of Serbia (CCS), due to severe hyponatremia (101 mmol/L) with psychiatric presentation (psychotic behavior, hallucinations). During hospital stay, the patient came in contact with a COVID-19 positive patient. After a polymerase chain reaction (PCR) SARS-CoV2 test, which was positive, she was transferred to the Zemun Clinical Hospital, a COVID-19 center, to continue treatment of hyponatremia and COVID-19.

According to the manufacturer’s instructions, hematologic and biochemical analyses were

**TABLE 1.** Differential diagnosis of hyponatremia

Hypovolemic	Euvolemic
Osmotic diuresis	SIAD
Salt-losing nephropathy	Lung diseases
Diuretic use	Intracranial diseases
Renal volume loss	Primary hypoadrenalism
Cerebral salt loss	Hypothyroidism
Diarrhea	Psychogenic polydipsia
Vomiting	Non-psychogenic polydipsia
Burns	Water intoxication
Excessive sweating	Excessive infusion treatment
Extrarenal volume loss	After transurethral prostatectomy
Hypervolemic	During early postoperative period
Cirrhosis with ascites	Vomiting and nausea
Congestive heart failure	Severe pain or emotional stress
Nephrotic syndrome, chronic renal failure	Medications including general anesthesia

SIAD = syndrome of inadequate antidiuresis

**TABLE 2.** Laboratory findings during hospital stay at the Department of Endocrinology, Clinical Center of Serbia (on admission and discharge)

Hematologic analysis	Biochemistry	Hemostasis parameter	Blood gases	Urinalysis
WBC (x10 <sup>9</sup> /L) 7.6...2.5	BG (mmol/L) 6.8...4.8	D-dimer (mg/L) 8.11...2.03	pH 7.52	Specific weight 1.018
RBC (x10 <sup>12</sup> /L) 3.84...3.9	CRP (mg/L) 6.5...2.6	PT (s) 12... 31.1	PaCO <sub>2</sub> (kPa) 4.73	pH 6
Hb (g/L) 117...118	Urea (mmol/L) 4.0...3.9	INR 0.89...2.42	PaO <sub>2</sub> (kPa) 12	Microscopy: 10-15 RBC, plenty of bacteria
MCV (fL) 95...94	Creatinine (μmol/L) 72...64	aPTT (s) 24.4...36.9	HCO <sub>3</sub> (mmol/L) 29	
Ht (L/L) 0.365...0.367	Total proteins (g/L) 62	Fibrinogen (g/L) 3.7...3.3	SaO <sub>2</sub> (%) 98%	Natriuresis (mEq/D) 13...14
Plt (x10 <sup>9</sup> /L) 304...344	Albumin (g/L) 45	Antithrombin 106%		Kaliuresis (mEq/D) 25...42
ESR (mm/h) 6/	Chol (mmol/L) 4.92	Protein C 132%		Chloriuresis (mEq/D) 23...24
	HDL-Chol (mmol/L) 1.57	Factor XI 137%		Urea (mmol/D) 512
	LDL-Chol (mmol/L) 3.0	Factor X 1		Creatinine (mmol/D) 17.9
	TG (mmol/L) 0.77	Factor IX 140%		Morning urine osmolality 167...551 mOsm/kg
	Iron (μmol/L) 10.1...11.7	Factor VIII 149%		
	Ferritin (μg/L) 175...155			
	TIBC (μmol/L) 45			
	Sodium (mmol/L) 103...108...124...130...139...144			24h urine osmolality 573 mOsm/kg
	Potassium (mmol/L) 3.2...3.8			Bacteriology: <i>E. coli</i>
	Chloride (mmol/L) 65...108			
	Calcium (mmol/L) 2.20...2.21			
	Phosphate (mmol/L) 0.71...1.24			
	AST (U/L) 39			
	ALT (U/L) 20			
	ALP (U/L) 64			
	GGT (U/L) 20			
	Plasma osmolality (mmol/L) 218... 276			

WBC = white blood cell count; RBC = red blood cell count; Hb = hemoglobin; Ht = hematocrit; Plt = platelet count; ESR = erythrocyte sedimentation rate; BG = blood glucose; CRP = C-reactive protein; Chol = cholesterol; HDL = high-density lipoprotein; LDL = low-density lipoprotein; TG = triglycerides; AST = aspartate aminotransferase; ALT = alanine transaminase; ALP = alkaline phosphatase; GGT = gamma-glutamyl transferase; PT = prothrombin time; aPTT = activated partial thromboplastin time; INR = international normalized ratio; PaCO<sub>2</sub> = partial pressure of carbon dioxide in arterial blood; PaO<sub>2</sub> = partial pressure of oxygen in arterial blood; HCO<sub>3</sub> = bicarbonates; SaO<sub>2</sub> = oxygen saturation in arterial blood

**TABLE 3.** Hormones, tumor markers, and immunology analyses during hospital stay at the Department of Endocrinology, Clinical Center of Serbia (on admission and discharge)

Hormone	Immunologic analysis	Tumor marker
TSH (μIU/mL) 0.7	ANA HEP2 IgG - nucleoplasm + homogeneous (1:40)	CA 125(U/mL) 37
FT4 (pmol/L) 20.9	IgG-AMA negative	CA 15-3 (U/mL) 18
FT3 (pmol/L) 2.64	IgG ANA negative	CA 19-9 (U/mL) 9
Cortisol (morning) (nmol/L) 486...497	IgG-ASMA negative	CEA (μg/L) 2.8
ACTH (pg/mL) 39.3	LKM1 Abs negative	Cyfra 21-1 (ng/mL) 3.2
LH (IU/L) 19.8	Antiparietal Abs positive	
FSH (IU/L) 54.6	IgG ACLA negative	
Prolactin (mIU/L) 492	IgM ACLA negative	
	ENA screen negative	

TSH = thyroid-stimulating hormone; FT4 = free thyroxine; FT3 = free triiodothyronine; ACTH = adrenocorticotropic hormone; LH = luteinizing hormone; FSH = follicular stimulating hormone; IgG = immunoglobulin G; ANA = antinuclear antibodies; AMA = anti mitochondrial antibodies; ASMA = anti smooth muscle antibodies; LKM1 = liver kidney microsomal 1 antibody; Abs = antibodies; ACLA = anticardiolipin antibodies; ENA = extractable nuclear antigen; CA = cancer antigen; CEA = carcinoembryonic antigen; Cyfra = cytokeratin-19 fragments

performed on Access-2 and DxC 800 Beckman Coulter automatic analyzers. Ultrasonographic examinations were performed on a Toshiba Xario device (Japan), using appropriate probes. Radiographic recordings were made on an AGFA DX-D 100+ device (Belgium, Germany). Computed tomography (CT) of organs and organ systems was performed on a Toshiba 128 slice (Japan), while magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) of the pelvis was done by use of the 1.5 Tesla Canon Titan (Malaysia).

## Results

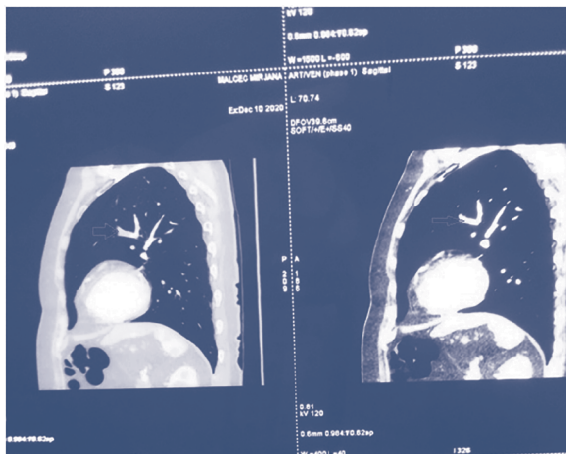
Tables 2 and 3 present the results of hematologic, biochemical, and hemostatic parameters and urinalyses performed at the Department of Endocrinology and Diabetes, CCS. No pathologic findings

were observed in the hematologic analyses performed. Biochemical results revealed severe hyponatremia (101 mmol/L), hypochloremia (65 mmol/L), hypoosmolarity (218 mmol/L), as well as moderate hypokalemia (3.2 mmol/L). The other biochemical parameters observed, including the general and organ-specific tumor marker, were within the normal range. Spot-urine natriuresis was under 30 mmol/L. *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*) was cultured in urine. Out of hemostatic parameters, elevated D-dimer (8.11 mg/L) was detected. The hypothalamic-pituitary-thyroid and hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axes maintained functional integrity, while the levels of gonadotropins were in the menopausal range. Apart from indirect immunofluorescence detected ANA HEP2 IgG homogeneous nucleoplasmic activity (1:40), other immunologic tests were without pathologic findings. To detect pathologic substrates causing hyponatremia, numerous imaging procedures were performed. Apart from the finding of a

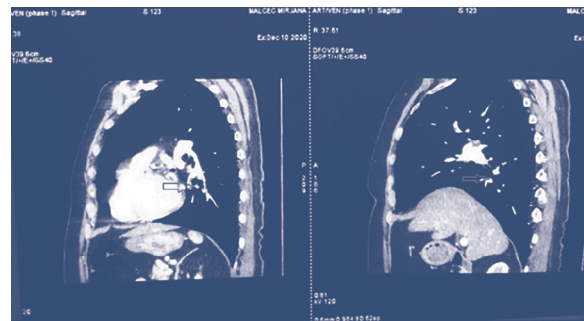
mildly elevated right hemidiaphragm on the initial and repeated chest x-ray scans, no other pathologic findings were found on radiographic (cranial and breast x-rays), ultrasonographic (abdomen, pelvis, breast, Doppler scan of lower limb blood vessels) or MRI procedures (pelvis).

Due to elevation of the right hemidiaphragm, a CT scan of the chest and abdomen indicated contrast filling defects characterized as acute thromboembolism in the branches for the anterior segment of the upper left and right lobes, as well as branches for the apical segment of the upper right lobe and branches of the anterobasal and laterobasal segment of the lower left lobe. No other radiologic changes (i.e., consolidation, infiltration, or collapse) of the lungs were seen (Figs. 3 and 4).

Due to epidemiologic reasons (contact with a SARS CoV2 positive person), our patient was



**FIG. 3.** Multi-slice computer tomography pulmoangiography 1 (arrows indicate pulmonary thromboembolism in the branches of the anterior segment of the upper left and right lobes).



**FIG. 4.** Multi slice computed tomography pulmoangiography 2 (arrows indicate pulmonary thromboembolism in the branches of anterobasal and laterobasal segment of the lower left lobe).

tested for PCR SARS CoV2, and the result was positive. According to the COVID-19 rules of the health care authorities, the patient was transferred to the COVID-19 Zemun Clinical Hospital for continued monitoring of electrolyte metabolism and treatment of PTE and COVID-19. Throughout the COVID-19 hospital stay, the patient was afebrile with no respiratory complaints, stable vital parameters, and mentally inconspicuous. Mild leukopenia and anemia, as well as moderate hypokalemia were verified by laboratory findings. Sodium values were stable throughout the stay in the COVID-19 center, without the need of substitution. She was treated with ceftriaxone, multivitamin therapy, and low molecular weight heparin. After the inconsistent INR values were observed during warfarin administration, direct oral anticoagulant (apixaban 10 mg/day) was introduced.

She was discharged from the COVID-19 Zemun Clinical Hospital in a good general and mental condition, afebrile, well-oxygenated (ambient  $SO_2$  99%), with normal sodium levels, and satisfying other laboratory findings listed in Table 4.

**TABLE 4.** Laboratory findings during hospital stay in COVID-19 Zemun Clinical Hospital (on admission and discharge)

Hematologic analysis	Biochemistry	Hemostasis parameter
WBC ( $\times 10^9/L$ ) 2.5...3	BG (mmol/L) 5.1	D-dimer (mg/L) 1...0
RBC ( $\times 10^{12}/L$ ) 3.49...3.72	Bilirubin direct ( $\mu\text{mol}/L$ ) 1.0	aPTT (s) 38.7...36
Hb (g/L) 107...114	Bilirubin total ( $\mu\text{mol}/L$ ) 5.6	PT (s) 40.4...26.5
Ht (L/L) 0.326...0.348	Total proteins (g/L) 54	INR 3.25...2.08
Plt ( $\times 10^9$ ) 263...183	Albumin (g/L) 35	TT (s) 22.2...18
	CRP (mg/L) 1.5...6.0	Anti Xa (U/mL) 0.3
	Potassium (mmol/L) 3.4...3.5	
	Sodium (mmol/L) 143...141	
	Calcium (mmol/L) 2.08	
	Chloride (mmol/L) 106...106	
	Phosphate (mmol/L) 1.36	
	Magnesium (mmol/L) 0.93	
	Ferritin ( $\mu\text{g}/L$ ) 172	
	AST (U/L) 34	
	ALT (U/L) 43	
	GGT (U/L) 20	
	CK (U/L) 86	
	Urea (mmol/L) 2.9...4.3	
	Creatinine ( $\mu\text{mol}/L$ ) 68...59	

WBC = white blood cell count; RBC = red blood cell count; Hb = hemoglobin; Ht = hematocrit; Plt = platelet count; BG = blood glucose; CRP = C-reactive protein; AST = aspartate aminotransferase; ALT = alanine transaminase; GGT = gamma-glutamyl transferase; CK = creatine kinase; PT = prothrombin time; aPTT = activated partial thromboplastin time; INR = international normalized ratio; TT = thrombin time

## Discussion

Hyponatremia ( $\text{Na} < 135 \text{ mmol}/L$ ) is among the most common electrolyte disturbances in clinical practice and is recorded in 15%-30% of hospitalized patients<sup>2</sup>. If hyponatremia persists even after repeated measurement, its etiology must be clarified.

In addition to often being a humoral manifestation of malignancy, it is a well-known marker of neurohumoral activation in patients with left ventricular heart failure. Additionally, it reflects the non-osmolar release of ADH due to activation of the sympathetic and renin-angiotensin-aldosterone systems<sup>16, 17</sup>.

Neurohumoral activation has also been demonstrated in patients with pulmonary hypertension and occurs in proportion to the degree of right ventricular dysfunction<sup>18, 19</sup>. Therefore, hyponatremia may indicate neurohumoral activation in the context of acute pulmonary hypertension, associated with PTE, and consequent right heart dysfunction, a known prognostic factor in patients with PTE<sup>20</sup>. A prospective study in patients with chronic pulmonary arterial hypertension showed a significant association between hyponatremia, the presence of right ventricular dysfunction, and a shorter survival rate<sup>21</sup>. Current recommendations advise conducting detailed echocardiographic and biohumoral examinations (i.e., measurement of brain natriuretic peptide)<sup>22</sup>; however, our patient did not perform them due to circumstances related to COVID-19, as well as the favorable clinical course.

Table 1 shows some of the causes of euvolemic hyponatremia. It is sometimes ominous, as it occurs due to altered ADH secretion or the effect on its receptors in the tubules, as part of malignant diseases, most often in the lungs. It is also known that vascular lesions and hereditary or acquired thrombophilia can often cause PTE. Likewise, hyperhomocysteinemia is a risk factor for venous thromboembolism because it interferes with the activation of coagulation factor Va by activating protein C. This factor also increases tissue factor expression and suppresses heparin sulfate, an endogenous anticoagulant<sup>23-26</sup>. Unlike malignancy-induced ADH secretion, which lasts as long as there is malignancy, the transient nature of presented hyponatremia that responds well to substotherapy supports the benign nature of the cause of hyponatremia, PTE<sup>4, 6</sup>. As one of the SIAD criteria, the absence of elevated natriuresis could be explained by shorter duration of hyponatremia-causative disease (acute PTE).

The clinical presentation spectrum of hyponatremia is impressive. The patients with hypo-

natremia are most often seen in traumatology, orthopedics, neurosurgery, and neurology. However, acute hyponatremia is most often accompanied by severe neurological disorders, often coma, primarily caused by brain edema. If hyponatremia is chronic, adaptive mechanisms allow patients to adapt gradually to low sodium levels. Likewise, rapid correction of hyponatremia can lead to central pontine myelinolysis, which dramatically affects the disease outcome<sup>4, 27, 28</sup>.

Regarding COVID-19, the real prevalence of hyponatremia in patients with lung affection, more infectious than vascular, is still unknown. Based on clinical experience, the prevalence of hyponatremia in COVID-19-associated pneumonia appears to be relatively low. There still are insufficient data on the impact of complicated pneumonia and massive PTE on SIAD development. However, it seems that the most severe forms of the disease contribute to the development of hyponatremia, especially in patients who received mechanical ventilation, which itself, especially when applied with high positive end expiration pressures (PEEP >10 cm H<sub>2</sub>O), contributes to hyponatremia<sup>21, 28-30</sup>. Recommendations for treating hyponatremia in COVID-19 do not differ from previous recommendations, i.e., treatment of the etiology of hyponatremia with its gradual and careful correction. Recommendations for using vaptans do not differ from the currently available ones<sup>4, 28, 31-34</sup>.

Clinicians should always consider hyponatremia etiologically and correct it appropriately. Vascular lung lesions may be associated with hyponatremia but also with COVID-19, which in itself is a risk factor for PTE.

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**SAŽETAK**

**Akutna teška euvolemijska hiponatremija uzrokovana segmentnom plućnom tromboembolijom i komplicirana infekcijom COVID-19: prikaz slučaja**

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Hiponatremija se često susreće u kliničkoj praksi. Euvolemijska hiponatremija (sindrom nedostatne antidiureze, *syndrome of inadequate antidiuresis*, SIAD) predstavlja izazove u dijagnostici i liječenju, kako u pogledu otkrivanja etiologije i postupne akutne supstitucije, tako i kasnijeg kauzalnog liječenja. Ovdje smo prikazali slučaj teškog SIAD-a uzrokovanog segmentnom plućnom tromboembolijom, koji se manifestirao kao akutna psihoza. COVID-19 je zakomplicirao tijek bolesti stečene u bolničkim uvjetima. Istodobnim liječenjem plućne tromboembolije, postupnom supstitucijom hiponatremije i liječenjem COVID-19 bolesnica se biokemijski i psihički potpuno oporavila. Čak i iskusni kliničari mogu biti zbunjeni raznolikom kliničkom manifestacijom SIAD-a. Pažljiva supstitucija hiponatremije i liječenje njezine etiologije temelj je liječenja SIAD-a.

**KLJUČNE RIJEČI**

*Hiponatremija; Hipertonična fiziološka otopina; Plućna tromboembolija*