

# Syphilis Proctitis: Review of 60 Cases

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## Background

- Syphilis infections have increased 71% since 2014
- Proctitis is a rare manifestation of early syphilis transmitted through anal intercourse
- Misdiagnosis of syphilitic proctitis as inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) may result from physician under-awareness

## Methods

- Case series – single institution cases
- Literature review (no lower year limit)
- Data extracted from articles and medical records

## Results

- 60 cases were identified (8 case series; 52 literature review)

## Demographics

- 100% of cases were in men (92% MSM)
- Age at diagnosis ranged from 15 to 73 years (average age 38 years)
- 56% (27 cases) were HIV co-infected

## Clinical Presentation

Table 1. Most Common Presenting Symptoms

Presenting symptom	Number of subjects (%)
Hematochezia	41 (69)
Anal pain	28 (47)

# Don't miss syphilis proctitis: take a good sexual history in men presenting with lower gastrointestinal symptoms



## Results Continued...

Table 2. Most Common Physical Exam Findings

Physical exam finding	Number of subjects (%)
Rectal mass	16 (41)
Lymphadenopathy	13 (33)
Rash	11 (28)

- Non-treponemal titers averaged 1:164 (range 1:2-1:1024)
- Endoscopic findings – 43% anorectal mass and 35% anorectal ulcer

## Histopathology- highly variable

- 72% showed chronic inflammatory infiltrates comprised of lymphocytes and plasma cells
- 21% showed granulomas, and 21% had at least mild architectural distortion. 22% showed basal lymphoplasmacytosis
- In 25 cases (78%), *Treponema pallidum* immunostain revealed spirochetes

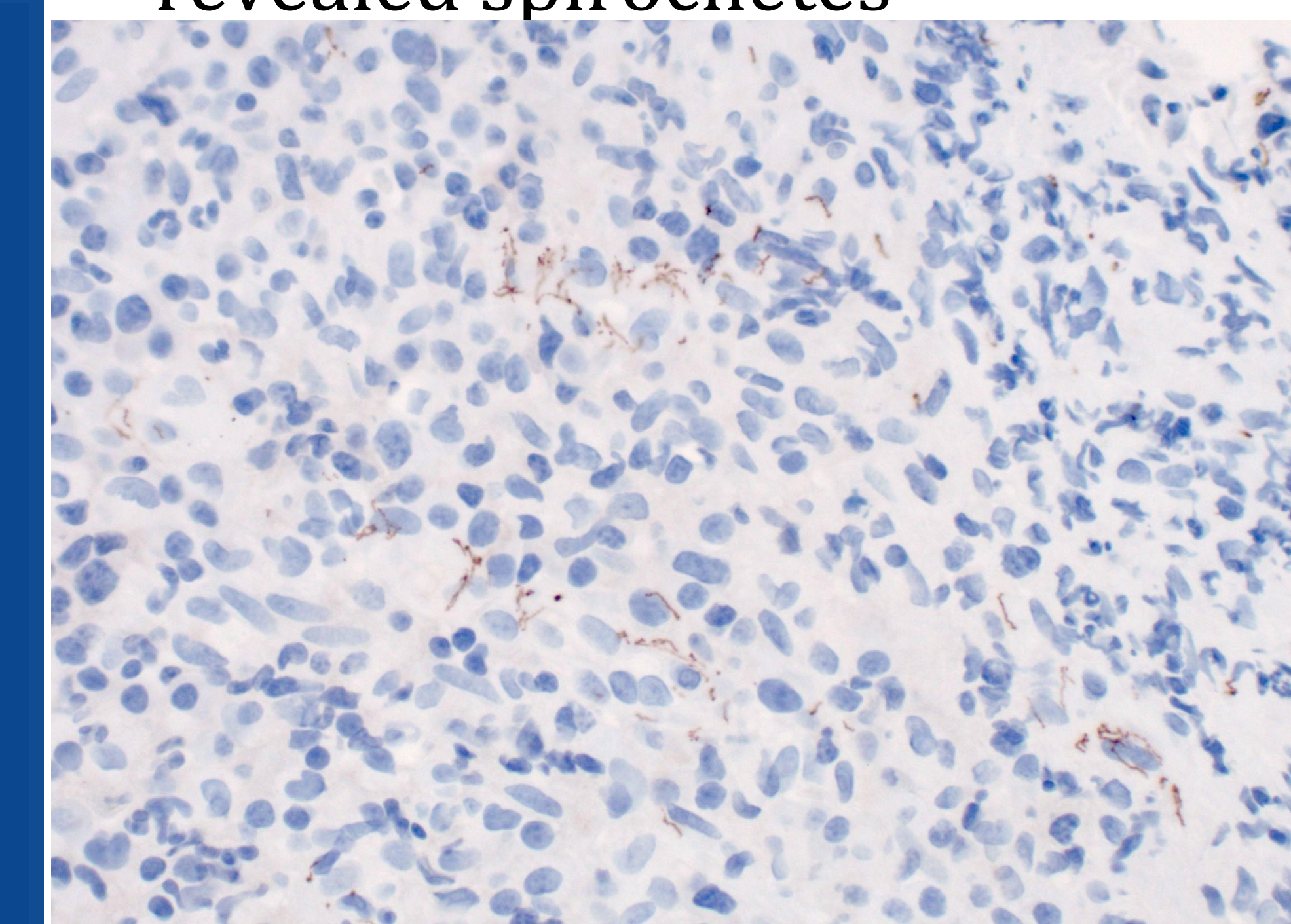


Figure 1. *Treponema pallidum* immunostain (rabbit polyclonal) 400x. Spirochetal organisms are highlighted with brown chromogen

## Conclusions

- Syphilitic proctitis is a manifestation of early syphilis and should be suspected in males presenting with lower gastrointestinal symptoms
- Contrary to prior reports, this large review reveals there is no pathognomonic histopathology, only some suggestive tissue findings
- A sexual history should be elicited and guide further testing
- Diagnostic delay due to misdiagnosis as IBD threatens patient and public health