

The Migrating Pancreas: Discovery of an Acquired Heterotopic Pancreas in the Small Bowel After a Distal Pancreatectomy

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Background

- A heterotopic pancreas refers to pancreatic tissue in an abnormal anatomical position separate from the main organ.
- Cases of heterotopic pancreas are rare, being found intraoperatively in less than 1% of cases, and with autopsy reports placing the rate of lesions around 0.5-13%
- Most heterotopic pancreas lesions are congenital in nature and discovered incidentally, as most are asymptomatic.
- Here we report a case of an acquired heterotopic pancreatic lesion in the small bowel of a patient who had previously undergone a distal pancreatectomy for a mucinous cystic neoplasm.

Case Presentation

- A 43-year-old female with a past surgical history of a sleeve gastrectomy and single-anastomosis duodenal-ileal bypass (SADI) initially presented with malnutrition secondary to diarrhea and chronic malabsorption.
- She was found to have an incidental mucinous neoplastic mass at the tail of the pancreas on MRI and subsequently underwent a laparoscopic distal pancreatectomy.
- Due to persistent diarrhea secondary to her SADI, we decided to proceed with an elective surgical revision.

Operative Findings

- Intraoperatively, we identified a small bowel mass with scattered nodules, prompting conversion to an open procedure.
- A small bowel resection of the affected segment about 40 cm distal to the ligament of Treitz was completed, along with proximalization of the gastrojejunostomy to lengthen the common channel and enhance nutrient absorption.

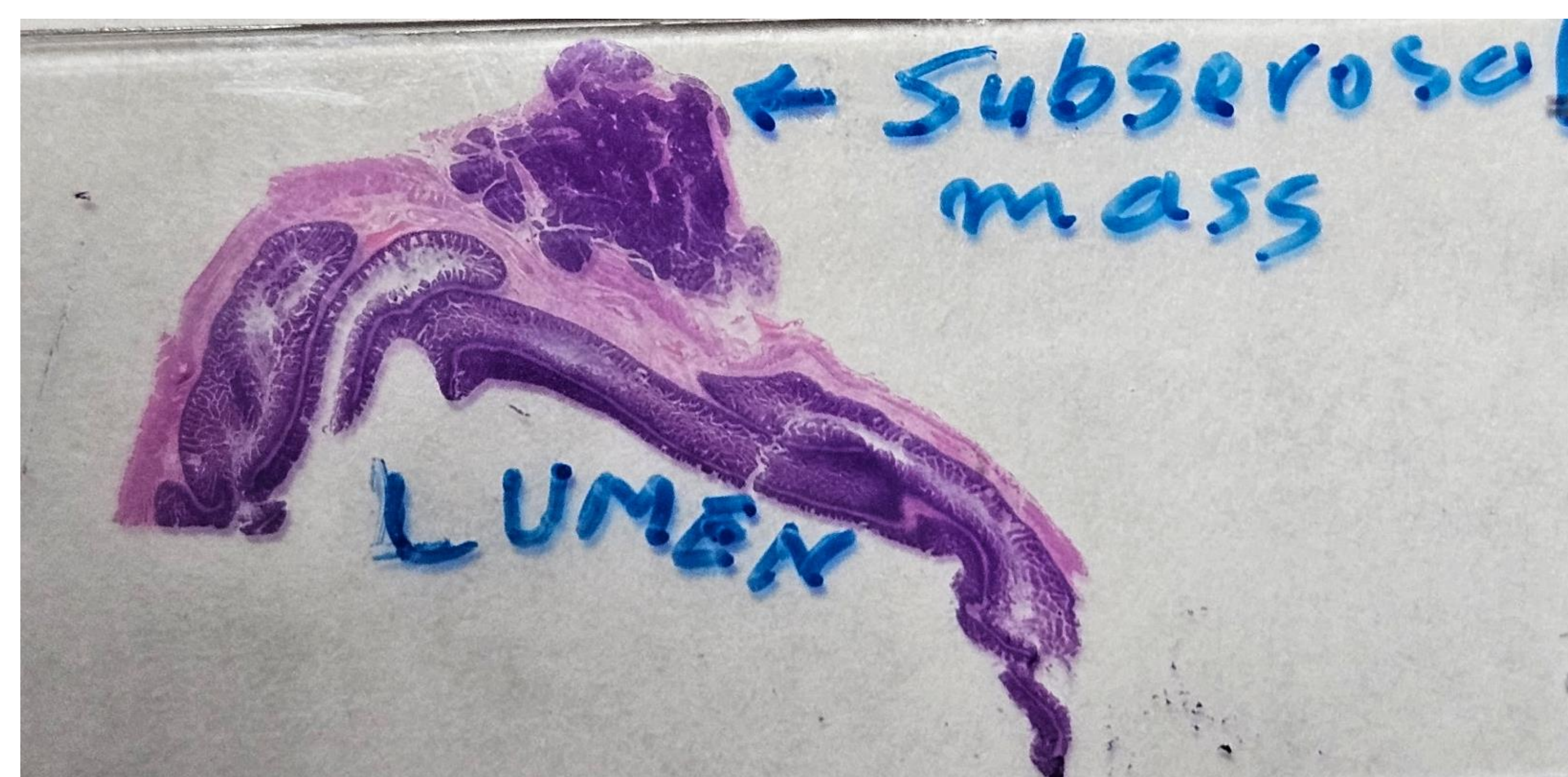


Figure 1: Well-circumscribed pancreatic acinar tissue within the muscularis of the wall.

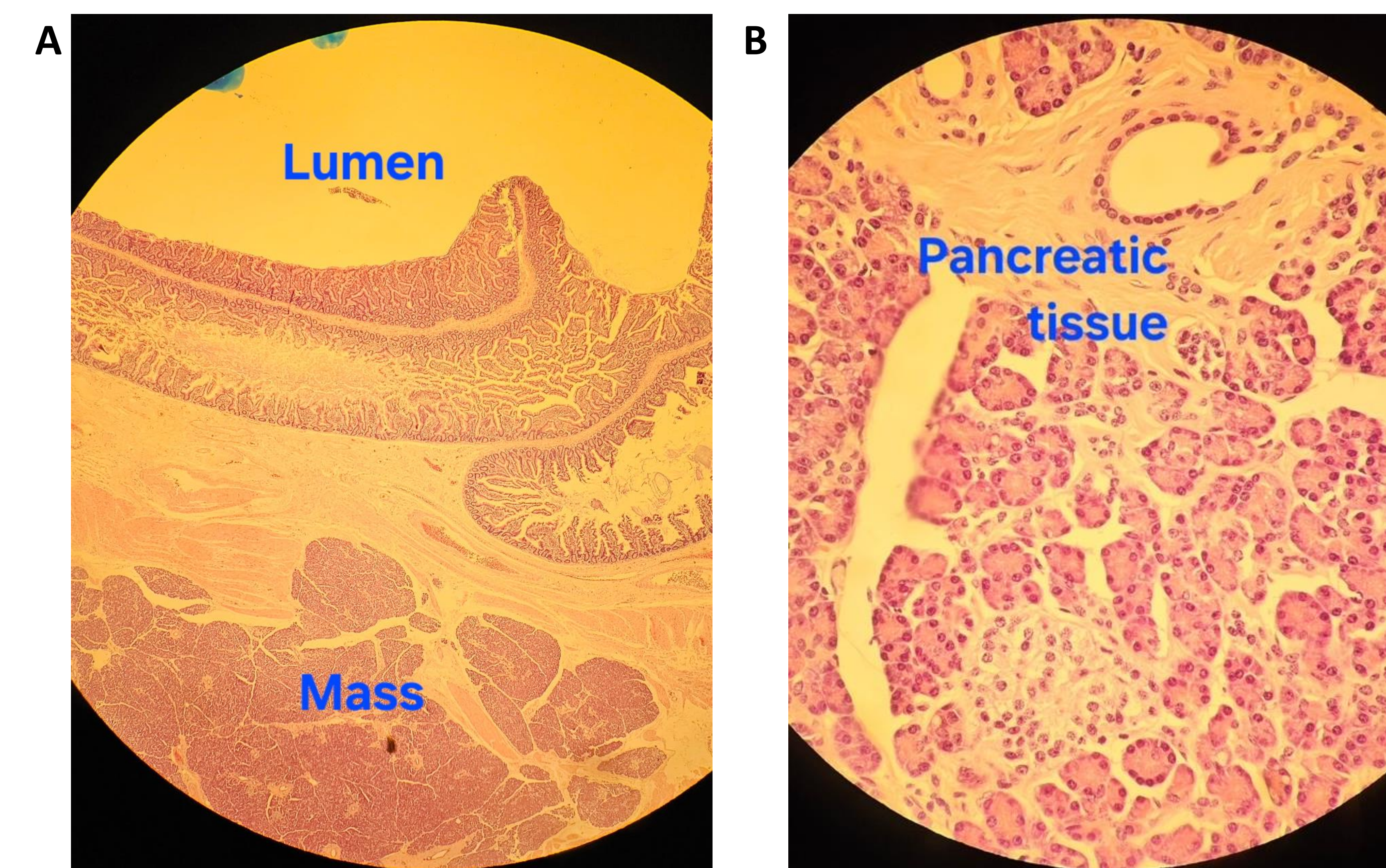


Figure 2: A: Segment of small intestine with an intramural mass located beneath the mucosa. B: Histologically, slides show a normal pancreas in variable mixtures of acini, ducts, and islets.

Discussion

- Congenital heterotopic pancreatic lesions are thought to develop due to the deposition of pancreatic tissue along the GI tract during embryonic development.
- To our knowledge, we report the first case of pancreatic heterotopia following a distal pancreatectomy, suggesting an acquired mechanism; it is possible that during the removal of the cystic pancreatic tumor in our patient, pancreatic cells were seeded along the small bowel, resulting in the development of a heterotopic pancreas.
- This case builds on our understanding of pancreatic pathophysiology and expands our differential diagnosis of small bowel tumors.