Non-convulsive Status Epilepticus: A Case Report

Ammar M Alobaidy, Alicia S Parker, Eric M Bershad
Baylor College Of Medicine, Houston, TX. Baylor St. Luke’s Medical Center, Houston, TX

Objective
To describe a rare presentation of prion disease in a patient with new onset non-convulsive status epilepticus.

Introduction
Sporadic Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease is a rare fatal neurodegenerative disease. Symptoms include rapidly progressive dementia, myoclonus, ataxia, and visual disturbances. Seizures are uncommon1. To date, there has only been one case series and a few case reports2-4. This report demonstrates the importance of evaluating for prion disease in patients with non-convulsive status epilepticus.

Medical History
• 71 yo female with diabetes, hypertension, hypothyroidism without cognitive or behavioral deficits in early 2014
• She had never traveled to Europe. No personal history of prion disease
• She had never been on steroids
• She had never traveled to Europe
• She had never had a stroke

• Jan 2015: She was aggressive with her neighbors and was arrested. She started to repeat herself often. No difficulty with no cognitive or behavioral deficits in early 2014
• Late 2014: Appetite declined, significant weight loss
• November 2014: She had multiple focal seizures a day.
• December 2014: She started to have episodes of incontinence. A stroke alert was activated.
• January 2015: She was aggressive with her neighbors and was arrested. She started to repeat herself often. No difficulty with no cognitive or behavioral deficits in early 2014
• June 2015: Unable to do finances, spoke less often, irritable
• June 3, 2015: Family found her unresponsive with urinary incontinence. A stroke alert was activated.

Initial Exam
Vital Signs: T 97.8, HR 82, RR 18, BP 182/83, 98% O2 on RA
General: Critically ill appearing. Dehydrated.
Mental Exam: Mute, not following commands. GCS: E4V1M1
Cranial Nerves: II - No blink to threat. III,IV,VI - Right gaze preference. XI - Right head deviation.
Strength/Sensation: Flaccid paralysis. No motor response to painful stimuli axially or in the extremities.
Reflexes: 1+ of the left biceps. No clonus. Babinski sign negative
Involuntary movements: Two beats of bilateral blinking, one beat of left foot twitch.

Evaluation

Serum:
• VZV PCR, HSV 1/2 PCR, immunofixation electrophoresis, serum electrophoresis and blood cultures were negative

Cerebrospinal fluid:
• Opening pressure: 10 cm of water
• Basic studies: Cell count, protein, glucose, and gram stain were unrevealing
• Further studies: Negative for herpes, varicella and an extensive paraneoplastic panel
• CSF 14-3-3 protein: positive
• CSF T-tau protein: 1751 pg/ml (more than 1150 carries a 76% probability of prion disease)

Urine:
• Urine culture negative

CT head: Without apparent pathology

EEG: multiple electrographic seizures during recording session

MR Imaging

FLAIR: subcortical hyperintensity with no mass lesion
DWI: Bilateral medial parietal lobe lateral cortical restricted diffusion and adjacent T2 FLAIR subcortical hyperintensity

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Conclusion
Non-convulsive status epilepticus is an extremely rare presentation of prion disease. Clinicians should consider prion disease as an etiology for NCSE and NORSE and evaluate for prions with the appropriate diagnostic tests. Unfortunately, there are no pathognomonic signs for diagnosing sCJD. Therefore, one must rely on clinical manifestations in combination with other diagnostic tests. We believe that the differential diagnosis needs to be carefully evaluated in order not to miss a possible reversible condition5.

References