NEUROLOGICAL PICTURE

Spontaneous basilar artery dissection: contribution of magnetic resonance imaging to diagnosis

Right vertebral angiography and axial T1 weighted MRI in a 53 year old man presenting with spontaneous isolated mesencephalic subarachnoid haemorrhage. Clinical outcome under conservative treatment was satisfactory.

On admission, left:

Top—upper half of the basilar artery is narrowed, suggesting either spasm or dissecting aneurysm.

Bottom—MRI shows a wall haematoma in the midpart of the basilar artery, surrounding an eccentric narrowed lumen, suggesting an isolated basilar artery dissection.

Two months later, right:

Top—normal basilar artery.

Bottom—intramural haematoma has spontaneously resolved; basilar artery lumen is of normal diameter.

It is important to perform an MRI in mesencephalic subarachnoid haemorrhage to detect basilar artery dissection.

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