NEUROLOGICAL PICTURE

Reversibility of brain lesions in eclampsia

Brain MRI of patient at caesarian section (A, B, C) and one month later (D, E, F).

A 31 year old woman in the 32nd week of gestation was admitted to hospital for eclampsia. Caesarean section was immediately performed with the delivery of a viable baby. Neurological examination was normal. Brain MRI disclosed T2 weighted hyperintense areas located mainly in the occipital lobes; the basal ganglia and brainstem were also involved (figure, A, B, C). One month later, MRI was normal (figure, D, E, F). Most authorities think that hypertensive encephalopathy and eclampsia share similar pathophysiological mechanisms¹; a focal breakthrough of cerebral auto-regulation could lead to reversible oedema, mainly involving posterior areas of the brain, brainstem, and basal ganglia due to their lesser degree of adrenergic innervation.²

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1 Hinchey J, Chaves C, Appignani B, Breen J, Pao L, Wang A, *et al*. A reversible posterior leukoencephalopathy syndrome. *N Engl J Med* 1996;334:494-500.

2 Schwartz RB, Jones KM, Kalina P, Bajakian RL, Mantello MT, Garada B, Holman BL. Hypertensive encephalopathy: findings on CT, MR imaging and SPECT imaging in 14 cases. *AJR Am J Roentgenol* 1992;159:379-83.