An unusual case of Behçet’s disease presenting with bilateral internal carotid artery occlusion

Behçet’s disease (BD) is a multisystemic recurrent inflammatory disorder, which is originally described as a triad of oral and genital ulcerations with uveitis. As vasculitis of the vasa vasorum is the main pathological hallmark of BD, it is generally seen in the form of superficial thrombophlebitis or occlusion of major veins; however arterial obstruction and aneurysms may also be seen to a lesser extent. We present a patient with BD who developed bilateral internal carotid artery (ICA) occlusions.

Case report

A 43 year old, right handed male patient was referred to Ege University Neurology Department for evaluation of an acute onset right sided weakness, fever, headache, and difficulty with gait and speech in August 2001. On admission, he was alert and fully oriented. His temperature was 38°C, pulse was regular (90/min), blood pressure was 150/80 mm Hg. His speech was severely dysarthric but he could name, repeat, read, and follow instructions. His cranial nerves and fundoscopy examination were normal. His gait was wide based and unsteady. He had four sided mild weakness, which was prominent on the right. Muscle stretch reflexes were normal but plantar reflexes were extensor bilaterally. His coordination was impaired in proportion to weakness in all four extremities. He had mild nuchal rigidity of the neck with positive Brudzinski’s sign. On physical examination, erythema nodosum like dark red, painful lesions were noticed on both anterior aspects of the legs. His ophthalmological examination did not reveal any signs of uveitis. He also complained of pain and fever in his scrotum, and urological examination showed swelling, induration, and marked tenderness of epididymis on both sides as the clinical findings of epididymitis.

His medical history showed that he had complained about recurrent oral aphthous lesions and aforementioned skin lesions for 3 to 10 years without medical consultation. He had no other medical history associated with BD. He was a moderate cigarette smoker for 20 years.

Laboratory tests were consistent with an inflammatory condition with a high erythrocyte sedimentation rate (100 mm 1st h) and C reactive protein (12.27 mg/dl; normal range 0–5 mg/dl) levels. CSF examination, serum immunoglobulin levels, platelet count, protein C, protein S, antithrombin III, C3 and C4 complement, rheumatoid factor, and lipid levels were within the normal range. Serum antibodies for antineutrophil cytoplasmatic and anticytoplasmic antibodies were negative. ECG, 2D echo, chest radiograph, abdominal ultrasonography, and colour Doppler ultrasonography of the lower extremity vessels were normal. Cranial magnetic resonance imaging showed diffuse cerebral atrophy and chronic ischaemic lesions in both cerebral hemispheres as well as the absence of the flow void in both ICA’s on T2 weighted axial images. Digital subtraction angiography (DSA) showed complete occlusion of the bilateral internal carotid arteries just rostral to the bifurcation (fig 1).

After consultation with the rheumatology clinic, a pathergy test was performed to confirm the diagnosis of BD and found to be positive. The patient was then transferred to the rheumatology clinic. He was treated with aspirin 300 mg/day, prednisolon 1 mg/kg/day, pentoxifyline 1200 mg/ day, 750 mg pulse cyclophosphamide monthly for BD. He was also treated with oral antibiotics and analgesics for the epididymitis. Two months later, he had almost completely recovered.

Comment

Our patient had presented with unusual neurological findings for a classic stroke syndrome and MRI showed bihemispheric ischaemic lesions and bilateral ICA occlusion, which was also shown by DSA. It is known that cardiovascular risk factors, smoking, fibromuscular dysplasia, or moyamoya disease are frequently found as an aetiological factor in patients with bilateral ICA occlusion, whereas essential thrombocytaemia, giant cell arteritis, and BD are among the very rare causes.

Although our patient did not have cardiovascular risk factors except for smoking, he had been suffering from BD for about 10 years, which was not diagnosed before neurological presentation. His medical history, skin lesions, and urogenital findings supported with a positive pathergy test verified the diagnosis of BD according to latest diagnostic criteria for BD.

Neurological involvement in BD has been reported to occur in 2.2% to 43% of cases in large series, either in the form of neuro-Behçet disease (parenchymal CNS involvement) or vasculo-Behçet disease (secondary or non-parenchymal CNS involvement) or both. Neuro-Behçet’s disease has a characteristic clinical picture with male predominance and typical cranial MRI findings of irreversible inflammatory parenchymal lesions, attributable to small vessel disease, which may rarely be confused with those of MS. On the other hand, vasculo-Behçet’s disease is attributable to large vessel disease generally in the form of cerebral venous thrombosis and has limited symptoms with a better prognosis. Our patient’s neurological signs and symptoms were highly suggestive of neuro-Behçet; however CSF findings with acellularity and normal protein level and neuro-imaging studies showing ischaemic lesions and bilateral ICA occlusions supported a very unusual type of vasculo-Behçet.

Diffuse cerebral atrophy and survival with minimal or no neurological deficit in our patient is not infrequent in patients with bilateral ICA occlusion. This is explained by the adequate collateral flow provided by verteobasilar system and slow, gradual occlusion.

Oclusive lesions in the bilateral ICAs, as seen in our patient, are extremely rare in BD and we suggest that this is a very unusual case of vasculo-neuro-Behçet’s disease. We also conclude that BD should always be remembered as an aetiological factor for bilateral ICA occlusions, especially in countries where the disease is highly prevalent.

References

Miller-Fisher syndrome and Hodgkin's disease

Miller-Fisher syndrome (MFS) is a rare clinical entity classically regarded as a variant of Guillain-Barré syndrome (GBS) and characterised by the clinical triad of ophthalmoplegia, ataxia and areflexia. It was first described by Miller-Fisher in 1965. GBS is an inflammatory polyradiculoneuropathy that can present with a variety of symptoms, including weakness, sensory changes, and autonomic dysfunction. The term “neuromyotonia” is sometimes used to describe a condition characterised by muscle fasciculations, repetitive jerking movements, and sometimes hyperreflexia. Sometimes, symptoms of autonomic dysfunction such as tachycardia, postural hypotension, and sweating may also be observed. The disease may be idiopathic or associated with various conditions such as myocardial infarction, sepsis, and malignancies.

Hodgkin's disease is a type of lymphoma that affects the lymph nodes and other lymphatic tissue. It is characterised by the presence of Reed-Sternberg cells, which are large, abnormal cells that can be found in various parts of the body. The disease is typically treated with a combination of chemotherapy and radiation therapy. In the case presented, the patient's Hodgkin's disease had relapsed after an initial remission. GBS can occur as a complication of Hodgkin's disease, particularly in cases where the disease has relapsed or is refractory to treatment. The presence of GBS in this case was further complicated by the presence of Miller-Fisher syndrome, which is a neurological condition that can occur in association with certain infections and autoimmune disorders.

The patient presented with symptoms consistent with both Miller-Fisher syndrome and Hodgkin's disease. The symptoms included ophthalmoplegia, ataxia, and areflexia, which are characteristic of Miller-Fisher syndrome. In addition, the patient had a history of Hodgkin's disease, which was considered a potential cause of the patient's neurological symptoms. The patient's neurological examination revealed a number of findings consistent with Miller-Fisher syndrome, including bilateral ptosis, diplopia, and areflexia. The patient's cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) examination was unremarkable, except for an elevated protein concentration of 0.79 g/l. The patient's blood tests showed a white cell count of 3.34 × 10^9/l, hemoglobin of 12 g/dl, and platelet count of 10^5/l.

The patient's neurological symptoms persisted despite treatment with systemic steroids and intravenous immunoglobulin. The patient ultimately died, and an autopsy was performed. The autopsy findings supported the diagnosis of Miller-Fisher syndrome and Hodgkin's disease, with evidence of infiltration of the lymph nodes by Reed-Sternberg cells.

The case highlights the importance of considering the potential for immune-mediated neurological complications in patients with Hodgkin's disease, particularly in cases where the disease has relapsed or is refractory to treatment. The case also underscores the importance of a careful neurological examination and appropriate investigation in patients with unexplained neurological symptoms. The case also highlights the importance of a multidisciplinary approach to the management of patients with Hodgkin's disease and neurological complications.

References

and plantar responses were flexor. Deep tendon reflexes were normal. Upward gaze was noted. Horizontal diplopia upper eyelid ptosis, rapidly increasing on Phalen’s signs were present at the right wrist three fingers of the right hand. Tinel’s and pain sensation was diminished only in the first muscles of hands and feet and in the orbicularis oculi muscles. Small amplitude, involuntarily movements of fingers and toes were conspicuous at rest. The fingers were stiff and the patient had difficulty performing rapid alternating movements with his fingers. Tactile and pain sensation was diminished only in the first three fingers of the right hand. Tinel’s and Phalen’s signs were present at the right wrist and there was right hand grip weakness. Right upper eyelid ptosis, rapidly increasing on upward gaze was noted. Horizontal diplopia occurred in right lateral and vertical gaze directions. Deep tendon reflexes were normal and plantar responses were flexor.

Complete blood count, serum creatinine, blood urea nitrogen, liver function tests, serum electrolytes, thyroid function tests, and serum creatine kinase were normal. Rheumatoid factor was negative and there were no antibodies against striated muscle, but antinuclear antibodies were positive at a titre of 1/80. Prostate specific and carcinoembryonic antigens were negative. Both AChR antibodies (26 nmol/ml, normal values less than 0.5 nmol/ml) and VGKC antibodies (1091 pmol/l (normal values less than 100 pmol/l)) were detected. Computed tomography of the chest was normal.

Nerve conduction studies showed evidence of a severe right sided carpal tunnel syndrome, but otherwise they were normal. Needle electromyography revealed myokymic discharges in distal muscles of upper and lower extremities (fig 1). These discharges consisted of bursts of motor unit potentials, appearing as doublets, triplets, or multiplets with intraburst frequencies of 40 to 100 Hz. Burst recurrence was irregular with an interburst frequency of 5–8 Hz. There was evidence of mild chronic denervation with slightly reduced recruitment in distal muscles. Anti-VGKC antibodies are found in approximately 40% of patients with acquired neuromyotonia; they are also found in patients with other neuromuscular hyperexcitability syndromes, such as cramp fasciculation syndrome, acquired rippling muscle syndrome, facial myokymia. In a significant proportion of these patients, coexistence of myasthenia gravis and neoplastic disorders, thymoma in particular, is observed. About 20% of all reported neuromyotonia patients had thymoma; 70% thereof also had myasthenia gravis and anti-AChR antibodies and 20% had anti-AChR antibodies without overt myasthenia gravis. The absence of anti-striated muscle antibodies and of radiological evidence of mediastinal tumour in a patient with neuromyotonia of nine years duration illustrates that the association of autoimmune neuromyotonia and myasthenia gravis can occur without thymoma.

Acute attacks and brain stem signs in a patient with glutamic acid decarboxylase autoantibodies

Glutamic acid decarboxylase (GAD) is a major autoantigen in type 1 diabetes mellitus and stiff-man syndrome. Patients with progressive cerebellar ataxia and GAD autoantibodies (GAD-Abs) have been reported, and the pathogenetic role for GAD-Abs in suppressing cerebellar γ-aminobutyric-acid (GABA)-ergic transmission has been discussed. We present a woman who eventually developed progressive cerebellar ataxia, but had stroke-like episodes and brain stem involvement during her clinical course.

A 63 year old woman suffered dizziness of sudden onset accompanied by nausea and vomiting. Her physician found horizontal, gaze evoked nystagmus. A few days later, she noticed transient horizontal diplopia, after which spontaneously all her symptoms gradually subsided. Two months later, she experienced intermittent vertigo when she turned her head and then unsteadiness of gait. Her past medical and family histories were unremarkable. On examination, she was fully conscious and had no general physical abnormalities. There was coarse horizontal nystagmus, coarser on the left side. On phonation, her posterior pharyngeal wall, shifted rightward, indicating paralysis of the contralateral muscles of the left side of the posterior pharyngeal wall (signe de rideau, Vernelet). She had ataxia in her left arm and leg and walked throwing the left leg outward. Although lesion in the left dorsal spinothalamic tract was suspected, MRI and MR arterioplastic venous images were unremarkable. A routine blood examination, as well as glucose tolerance and thyroid function tests, detected no abnormalities. CSF analysis was normal with negative oligoclonal IgG bands and a
normal IgG index of 0.45. Her condition remained unchanged for six months, after which gait unsteadiness progressed gradually for one month. Thereafter, she had difficulty in speaking and swallowing on waking in the morning. In addition to the signs seen at the first presentation, a neurological examination showed ataxic dysarthria and limb ataxia on both sides. She became dependent on walking aids. The muscular tone of her limbs was decreased, but the strength was normal. Tendon reflexes were normal, and plantar responses flexor on both sides. There was neither sensory nor bladder disturbance. Repeat CSF analysis and brain MRI results were normal, with a normal cerebrospinal fluid scintigraphy and nerve conduction studies gave normal results.

Routine haematological and blood chemistry studies, as well as the serum levels of vitamina B1, B12, and E, were normal. Fecal occult blood was negative. Infection by neurotrophic viruses was excluded serologically. Polymerase chain reaction analysis of the CSF for herpes simplex virus types 1 and 2 was negative. A search for gynaecological, breast, or lung cancer, as well as haematological malignancies, including whole body computer tomography, bilateral mammography, and bone and chest scintigrams produced negative results; anti-Hu and Yo antibodies were negative. Genetic analysis for spinocerebellar ataxia type 6 was negative. Glucose tolerance was impaired, but insulin secretion persisted. The serum GAD-Abs level determined by radioimmunoassay was highly increased at 10.400 U/ml (normal <1.5 U/ml). Evaluation of GAD-Abs from plasma frozen from her first presentation showed a titre of 9800 U/ml. Serum GAD-Abs activity in the patient's serum after corticosteroid stimulation hormone was slightly increased, but thyroid hormone levels were normal, indicative of subclinical hypothyroidism associated with autoantibody production. Pathological examination of the parathyroid gland and thyroid gland. Low titre positivities were found for antinuclear antibody, anti-double stranded DNA, anti-parial cellular antibodies, and anti-insulin antibodies. CSF GAD-Abs titre was 496 U/ml. Intrathecal GAD-Abs synthesis, calculated by Schüller's formula, gave a ratio of 10.7 for intrathecal GAD-Abs specific activity (ASA)/serum ASA, consistent with positive intrathecal synthesis.

Her limb and gait ataxia progressed and were overtaken by truncal ataxia within a month. She underwent a five time course of double filtration plasmapheresis that filtered 15 litres of plasma. Immediately after completion of the plasmapheresis course, her GAD-Abs titre decreased to 4700 U/ml, and left posterior pharyngeal wall motion and independent gait returned. Ataxia, however, returned three weeks later and then progressed, accompanied by a gradual rise in GAD-Abs titre. A five day course of intravenous immunoglobulins 0.4 g/kg/day produced no improvement. The overall clinical picture for this patient, subacute cerebellar ataxia, is complicated by acute onset, exacerbations, and such signs of brain stem involvement as hemiparesis of the posterior pharyngeal wall and asymmetrical coarse nystagmus. Although she does not have diabetes mellitus, the high serum GAD-Abs titre, intrathalcal GAD-Abs synthesis, and presence of organ specific autoantibodies are comparable to previous findings for patients with progression of cerebellar ataxia and GAD-Abs.1,2 Selective suppression of GABA-ergic transmission by GAD-Abs is a possible cause of SMS, cerebellar ataxia, focal epilepsy, and palatal myoclonus. This mechanism, however, does not explain our patient's paralytic syndrome of the pharyngeal constrictor muscles because motoneurons in the nucleus ambiguous receive GABA mediated inhibition.3 As speculated by Honnorat et al.,4 high GAD-Abs titre would merely reflect the presence of a more complex immune reaction against the nervous system. In this context, the subacute and ataxic presentation with high serum GAD-Abs titres suggests the possibility that the GAD-Abs might have been a paraneoplastic phenomenon. Selivis Smitt et al5 reported reversible cerebellar ataxia attributable to autoantibodies against a glutamate receptor in two patients with Hodgkin's disease.3 At present, however, follow up examination of this patient showed no evidence for malignancy. For the case of our patient that progression of ataxia with high serum GAD-Abs titre may present with episodes that resemble multiple sclerosis or recurrent brain stem encephalitis.

S Matsumoto, T Kusuharu, M Nakajima, S Ouma, M Takahashi, T Yamada
Department of Neurology, School of Medicine, Fukuoka University, Japan

Correspondence to: Dr M Nakajima, Department of Neurology, School of Medicine, Fukuoka University, 7-5-1 Honpa, Chuo-ku, Fukuoka, Fukuoka, Japan B14-0180; masashi@fukuoka-u.ac.jp

References

High concentrations of sVCAM-1 and sICAM-1 in the cerebrospinal fluid of patients with intracerebral haemorrhage are associated with poor outcome

Intracerebral haemorrhage (ICH) accounts for approximately 10% of strokes and is a life threatening condition with a 30 day mortality rate of about 45%. The adhesion molecules intercellular adhesion molecule-1 (ICAM-1) and vascular cell adhesion molecule-1 (VCAM-1) are proinflammatory parameters for the activation of the immune system.1,2 They have been correlated with acute inflammation in several systemic and neurological inflammatory diseases. Recently, it was suggested that an inflammatory reaction is responsible for reperfusion damage leading to brain damage and tissue destruction after acute ischaemia and subarachnoid haemorrhage.3,4 In this study, we investigated whether ventricular cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) and serum concentrations of adhesion molecules can be used as prognostic markers for the clinical outcome of patients with ICH.

For this purpose, we studied prospectively 10 patients with acute ICH and ventricular tamponade. Estimated blood volume of the ICH was between 40 and 60 ml in all patients. Initial intubation and mechanical ventilation due to coma were required in all patients. All of them were being treated at the neurological intensive care unit after neurosurgical application of a ventricular drainage to treat acute hydrocephalus. Paired serum and CSF samples from the ventricular drainage were obtained within eight hours after the initial symptoms attributed to ICH and within three hours after operation. Concentrations of soluble ICAM-1 (sICAM-1) and VCAM-1 were determined by enzyme linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA). In corresponding clinical examinations, the Scandinavian stroke scale and Glasgow coma scale scores were determined. The patients were categorised into two groups: patients who survived (n = 6) and patients who died (n = 4) from cerebral causes within eight weeks after the onset of ICH. Patients with prior cerebrovascular diseases and patients who subsequently died of non-cerebral causes were excluded from this pilot study. Data were analysed using the SPSS statistical program (SPSS, Chicago, Illinois, USA). The Wilcoxon test was applied to compare the two patient groups.

The two patient groups (surviving versus non-surviving) did not differ statistically with regard to age, sex, location and side of ICH, and initial Glasgow coma scale and Scandinavian stroke scale scores. As fig 1 shows, the CSF concentrations of sICAM-1 were below 3.7 ng/ml (mean (SD) 8.7 (4.7) ng/ml) and of sVCAM-1 below 35.4 ng/ml (11.5 (13.1) ng/ml) in the group of patients who survived (n = 6). However, in patients with a lethal outcome (n = 4), initial ventricular CSF concentrations of sICAM-1 were above 18.5 ng/ml (25.5 (9.3) ng/ml) and of sVCAM-1 were above 44.5 ng/ml (76.8 (45.0) ng/ml). These differences were significant for the CSF concentrations of sICAM-1 (p < 0.01) and of sVCAM-1.
sVCAM-1 (p < 0.001). However, the concentrations of adhesion molecules in serum did not differ significantly (non-surviving: 444 (152) ng/ml for sICAM-1, 1422 (465) ng/ml for sVCAM-1; surviving: 463 (110) ng/ml for sICAM-1, 1147 (382) ng/ml for sVCAM-1).

This is the first study to investigate soluble adhesion molecules in CSF and serum in patients with ICH with ventricular tamponade. We found a strong correlation between clinical outcome and the concentrations of soluble adhesion molecules in the CSF of patients with acute ICH and ventricular drainage. Moreover, we found more than threefold increases of sICAM-1 and of sVCAM-1 in the CSF of patients with lethal outcome as compared with CSF concentrations from patients with multiple sclerosis (sICAM-1: 2.8 ng/ml, range 0.9–12.7; sVCAM-1: 4.2 ng/ml, range 0.2–1.3) and from healthy donors (sICAM-1: 5.2 (2.2) ng/ml) as determined in our laboratory by identical test systems. The finding that the soluble adhesion molecules were increased in CSF but not in serum may indicate that the process leading to poor outcome occurs predominately in the brain. There are two possible explanations for the origin of increased CSF concentrations of soluble adhesion molecules. Firstly, brain tissue destruction may lead primarily to the release of adhesion molecules due to necrotic destruction. Secondly, ICH may initiate an inflammatory process leading to secondary brain damage, as has been suggested in human ischaemic stroke, as well as for experimental ICH and subarachnoid haemorrhage in animal models. With regard to the second hypothesis, it would be interesting to investigate the effects of early anti-inflammatory treatment in patients with ICH and an initially high locally increased concentration of adhesion molecules in their ventricular CSF samples. In this condition, early application of corticosteroids may be useful to suppress the deviating inflammatory reaction. The blockage of ICAM-1 and VCAM-1 by systemic treatment with monoclonal antibodies would probably not be helpful, as the pathogenetic concept is to block the migration of inflammatory cells into the central nervous system. However, based on our results, it can be speculated that these cells are already inside the central nervous system and thus out of reach of these antibodies.

With these data of only 10 patients, it cannot finally be concluded whether the increased soluble adhesion molecules in CSF are indicators of the fatal process or are responsible for the initiation of secondary brain damage.

Acknowledgements
Dr B Engelhardt is gratefully acknowledged for critically discussing the manuscript.

Ondine’s curse in a woman with Leber’s hereditary optic neuropathy
Leber’s hereditary optic neuropathy (LHON) is a maternally inherited disease of mitochondrial DNA. Several mutation sites have been described. All have been associated with visual loss, but mutations at nucleotide position 11778, 3460, and recently 14484, have also been associated with a multiple sclerosis (MS)-like disease. We report a woman with undiagnosed LHON who presented with life threatening ventilatory failure. A 39 year old woman who had had bilateral synchronous severe visual loss to perception of light some two years earlier (see below), was admitted after a two week illness with a purulent cough. She was confined to bed and had received oral antibiotics from her general practitioner. She had a history of chronic headaches but reported no change in their frequency before presentation. On admission she was obtunded with a Glasgow Coma Scale (GCS) score of 3/3. She was hyperventilating, with a severe respiratory acidoses. Arterial blood gas (ABG) showed pH 7.04, Po2 40.9 kPa, Pco2 16.2 kPa, and bicarbonate 22 mmol/l. She was admitted to an intensive care unit and ventilated with later tracheostomy. She was weaned from the ventilator after 31 days and transferred to a ward. Five days later she had a second respiratory arrest requiring further ventilation. She was transferred from the ward to another unit 73 days after admission for consideration of long term non-invasive ventilation. This patient had consumed alcohol to excess and had been admitted previously for benzodiazepine overdose and complications of alcoholic liver disease. Two years earlier she had presented to an ophthalmologist complaining of two months of painless visual loss. Visual acuity was counting fingers bilaterally with central scotomata and absent pupil reactions. Fundoscopy showed bilateral disc oedema, dilated capillaries around the disc margins, and venous pulsations. A CT brain scan was normal, but the patient declined further investigation and a diagnosis of possible toxic amblyopia was made. There was no family history of visual loss. She had three siblings in their 30s, and three children aged 9–12 years who were well.

On examination after transfer (two months after her first respiratory arrest), she was alert, oriented, and breathing room air spontaneously. She was unable to stand and had globally wasted limbs consistent with prolonged illness. She had just perceived bilaterally and both optic discs looked pale and the pupils were mid-dilated and unreactive. She had a divergent gaze in the primary position with coarse gait towards all sides in all directions. A jaw jerk was present and she had a mild facial plegia with intact sensation. She could speak and swallow adequately and was able to cough and hold her breath to command. She had a spastic quadriparesis with grade 4/5 power in the arms but weaker legs and a flicker of movement only at the toes. Anterior abdominal motion during breathing while lying supine was intact. Reflexes were brisk throughout and plantar responses were extensor. There was a subjacent sensory abnormality to light touch to the mid-thighs and joint position sense was severely impaired in these lower limbs. Breath sounds were quiet and chest excursion limited. She had a distended abdomen with a four finger breadth liver edge palpable and shifting dullness consistent with ascites. ABG on air showed pH 7.31, Po2 6.8 kPa, Pco2 10.5 kPa, and bicarbonate 34.8 mmol/l. Four hours later she became drowsy with a GCS of 8/15. Further ABG revealed pH 7.19, Pao2 5.5 kPa, Pco2 12.8 kPa, and bicarbonate 28.3 mmol/l. After four hours of non-invasive intermittent positive pressure ventilation (NIPPV); ABG on two litres of entrained oxygen showed pH 7.44, Pao2 16.4 kPa, Pco2 5.2 kPa, HCO3 27.4 mmol/l. She was subsequently transferred to a ward and treated with NIPPV, on room air, at a pressure of 1 cm H2O overnight and during daytime naps.

An MRI scan of her brain showed symmetrical high signal lesions in the brainstem in the floor of the fourth ventricle at the level of the obex and in the medulla and upper cervical cord (fig 1). The medulla and upper cervical cord were spared and in particular there were no lesions suggestive of central pontine myelinolysis or alcoholic damage. CSF examination was unremarkable except for a marginally increased protein at 0.48 g/l. CSF and...
plasma lactate were both 2.1 mmol/l and oligoclonal bands were not found. DNA was extracted from a blood sample and analysed using standard procedures and was negative at positions 3243, 3484, 8344, 8993, 3460, and 14484, but with a preserved capacity for volitional respiratory control during sleep with well preserved respiratory groups respectively, and would be unable to walk unaided. Eight months after her admission she was able to take a 45 minute daytime nap and maintain an oxygen saturation of >97% throughout, while breathing room air unassisted.

### Table 1

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Vaccine</th>
<th>GBS Patients</th>
<th>Relapses</th>
<th>CIDP Patients</th>
<th>Relapses</th>
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Some patients had received more than one vaccine.

### References


### Risk of relapse of Guillain-Barré syndrome or chronic inflammatory demyelinating polyradiculoneuropathy following immunisation

Reports of the rare occurrence of Guillain-Barré syndrome (GBS) or chronic inflammatory demyelinating polyradiculoneuropathy (CIDP) following immunisation and occurrence of symptoms following subsequent immunisation4 have given rise to concern over the safety of vaccine administration in this patient group. Similar concerns have been addressed and dismissed in patients with multiple sclerosis, but no such information exists for inflammatory neuropathy. To provide more information about vaccine safety in GBS and CIDP we audited the recurrence of neurological symptoms following immunisation.

The Guillain-Barré Syndrome Support Group, a British patient organisation, posted 3000 questionnaires to its members, asking them to identify their illness, record all immunisations administered after their illness, and describe any symptoms within six weeks of immunisation suggestive of recurrence of GBS or worsening of CIDP.

All but one of the patients who reported neurological symptoms after immunisation were contacted by telephone to confirm their history and to grade their symptoms using the modified Rankin scale. For the patient who could not be contacted by telephone, the patient’s consultant neurologist provided the information. Questionnaires were sent to the general practitioner for each patient who reported a “relapse” to confirm which vaccine had been administered.

A total of 1141 patients (37.1%) completed the questionnaires, of whom 927 had had GBS, 179 had CIDP, and eight were excluded because they had other diseases. Of the 927 patients with GBS, 311 had received immunisations since having GBS. Eleven (3.5%, 95% confidence limits (CL) 1.8%, 6.2%) reported symptoms including increased fatigue, weakness, numbness, and paraesthesiae, but these were usually mild and no patient required hospitalisation or treatment. In the cases symptoms came on within 24 hours of immunisation and all but one developed symptoms within one week of immunisation. One patient reported symptoms rendering him unable to walk unaided. In all cases symptoms resolved within 2 weeks, which increased his modified Rankin scale score from grade 2 to 4.

Influenza, tetanus, and typhoid were the most common immunisations associated with a relapse after GBS but the number of patients who reported symptoms was small compared with the total numbers receiving each of these vaccines (table 1). Although the results suggest that some vaccines that are administered less frequently (such as diphtheria) may be associated with a higher relapse risk, the numbers were small and most of these vaccines were administered at the same time as other vaccines.

Of the 311 patients with GBS who had received vaccines after having GBS, 29 had also received a vaccine in the six weeks before the onset of their initial illness. Two of these patients (6.9%, 95% confidence limits (CL) 0.85%, 22.8%) had a recurrence of symptoms after a second, different, vaccine was subsequently administered.

Of the 179 patients with CIDP, 65 had been immunised after disease onset. Five reported worsening of neurological symptoms following immunisation. In three the symptoms were similar to a typical relapse of their CIDP but only one of these patients required treatment within two months of immunisation. The other two patients with CIDP were immunised when already experiencing mild neurological symptoms, which then worsened, so that their modified Rankin scale score moved from 2 to 4 and they became dependent on a walking stick and unable to drive.

Of the patients with CIDP who experienced a relapse after immunisation, two relapses occurred among 23 patients who received the tetanus vaccine, giving a risk of relapse of 8.7%. Two of 46 (4.3%) patients with CIDP had relapses after influenza vaccine, of whom one had simultaneous pneumococcal and meningococcal vaccine. Fourteen patients with CIDP had no symptoms of relapse following immunisation with typhoid vaccine. Between one and seven patients with CIDP had no Wikipedia copyright.
symptoms after yellow fever, diphtheria, meningococcal, oral polio, BCG, hepatitis A, hepatitis B, cholera, or rubella vaccine.

This audit of patients with GBS and CIDP who have received vaccines suggests that the risk of relapse following immunisation is low. The response rate to the questionnaire was small as a proportion of the membership of the GBS Support Group. This is partly because an unknown but large proportion of members are relatives or friends and not former GBS or CIDP patients.

Only 11 of 311 patients with GBS (3.5%, 95% CI 1.8%, 6.2%) who had been immunised after having the disease reported a recurrence of symptoms. All of the vaccines that were associated with neurological symptom recurrence had also been received by many more patients who remained well. Some of the patients who reported symptoms after receiving vaccines had also received the same or other vaccines on other occasions without experiencing any problems. Only one respondent experienced symptoms that in creased their modified Rankin scale score. The respondent experienced symptoms that in creased their modified Rankin scale score. The risk of relapse severe enough to alter the modified Rankin scale score is 0.3% (95% CI 0.01%, 1.78%) while the risk of a relapse requiring treatment or hospitalisation is at most 1.89% (95% CI).

It is more difficult to draw conclusions about the risk of immunisation for relapse in CIDP because our sample size was smaller. Five (7.7%) out of 65 patients noted a return of symptoms following immunisation. The reports of minor symptoms or requiring treatment or hospitalisation is at an unknown but large proportion of members who have received vaccines suggests that the risk of relapse following immunisation in multiple sclerosis. All of the vaccines that were associated with neurological symptom recurrence had also been received by many more patients who remained well. Some of the patients who reported symptoms after receiving vaccines had also received the same or other vaccines on other occasions without experiencing any problems. Only one respondent experienced symptoms that increased their modified Rankin scale score. The respondent experienced symptoms that increased their modified Rankin scale score. The risk of relapse severe enough to alter the modified Rankin scale score is 0.3% (95% CI 0.01%, 1.78%) while the risk of a relapse requiring treatment or hospitalisation is at most 1.89% (95% CI). It is more difficult to draw conclusions about the risk of immunisation for relapse in CIDP because our sample size was smaller. Five (7.7%) out of 65 patients noted a return of symptoms following immunisation. The reports of minor symptoms or acceleration of deterioration following influenza and pneumococcal vaccines merit caution in recommending these immunisations in patients with CIDP, although the risk of infection in immunosuppressed patients may outweigh any potential risk. Of greatest concern is the risk of relapse following tetanus toxoid, which was 8.7% (95% CI 1.7%, 28.0%) in our patient sample. In view of these figures and previous reports of relapse of CIDP following tetanus toxoid, patients may wish to avoid routine tetanus toxoid immunisation.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge the difficulties in drawing conclusions from a questionnaire in which the patients reported their diagnostic classification and relapses. It is intuitively likely that more patients who experienced symptoms following immunisation responded to the questionnaire, which would overestimate the frequency of relapses. Consequently the true risks of relapse following immunisations after GBS or in CIDP may be less than those discovered in this audit.

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J Pritchard, R Mukherjee, R A Hughes
Department of Neuroimmunology, Guy’s, King’s & St Thomas’ School of Medicine, Hodgkin Building, Guy’s Hospital, London SE1 1UL

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Correspondence to: Dr J Pritchard; Jane.pritchard@kcl.ac.uk

References

Hypoglycaemia induced by phenytoin treatment for partial status epilepticus
A 22 year old woman was admitted at our epilepsy unit in status epilepticus. On examination, seizures were characterised by a confusional state with little response to external stimuli, and recurrent, brief, tonic motor manifestations lateralised to the left side.

Family history was negative for epilepsy and metabolic disorders. Full term birth was uncomplicated and first psychomotor developmental milestones were normal.

In the past medical history there was no sign of any metabolic disorder, and no reports of cognitive dysfunction or personality disturbances. At the age of 16, the patient presented with epilepsy, which was characterised by two types of seizures: global tonic seizures, which occurred periodically and episodes of loss of contact without any other manifestations, which were rare. The patient was treated for many years with 20 mg of clobazam twice daily. The awake EEGs that were performed routinely during the years of treatment with clobazam showed normal background rhythm with rare epileptiform discharges, characterised by irregular 2–3 Hz spike and wave complexes localised over both frontal-central regions. Magnetic resonance imaging of the brain, which was performed at the age of 18 years, showed no abnormalities.

On the day of admission at the epilepsy unit, the patient had an urgent EEG that revealed continuous, rhythmic spikes or spike and wave complexes over both frontal-central regions with right predominance. Emergency drug treatment with intravenous lorazepam 4 mg was performed twice with a 15 minute interval, but there was no change in the clinical status. Therefore, after 30 minutes, intravenous phenytoin 1000 mg was given by infusion over a period of 20 minutes, and then an infusion of 750 mg of phenytoin was set up for a period of 24 hours. Clinical symptoms and EEG abnormalities rapidly improved and completely resolved after 40 minutes from the start of the administration of phenytoin.

Nine hours later, while the medical observation was still ongoing, the patient developed an episode of global tonic seizures, which was preceded by prodromal symptoms, including tachycardia, sweating, light headness, and irritability.

On examination, there was reduction of alertness, confusion, and tachycardia with RR of intermediate diameter and reactive to the light. No focal neurological signs were observed. EEG monitoring did not show any abnormalities. Emergency blood tests revealed severe hypoglycaemia (<20 mg/dl). Prompt correction of the hypoglycaemia was obtained by the intravenous infusion of 50 ml of 50% glucose, and a consequent recovery of consciousness occurred. Phenytoin infusion was then withdrawn and oxcarbazepine was titrated. In the following days no further episodes of hypoglycaemia were noticed. The patient was therefore investigated with the oral glucose tolerance test, which showed normal levels of plasma glucose, immunoreactive insulin, and immunoreactive insulin/plasma glucose, and with administration of oral glucose did not show evidence of pancreatic insulinaemia.

Comment
We have described a patient who experienced a severe episode of hypoglycaemia induced by intravenous phenytoin, which was administered at the doses recommended for the treatment of status epilepticus. It is known that phenytoin interfere with glucose metabolism. Indeed, it may inhibit the release of glucose stimulated insulin and induce a consequent hyperglycaemia. The ability of phenytoin to inhibit insulin release has been suggested to be related to the blockage of Ca2+ uptake via voltage dependent Ca2+ channels. For this hyperglycaemic propriety, phenytoin has been often used in the treatment of hypoglycaemia induced by insulino-insoluble insulinomas.

Beside the well known hyperglycaemic effect of phenytoin, it has been reported that high doses of the drug can induce hypoglycaemia. In particular, a recent study reported a case of hypoglycaemia secondary to an acute voluntary intoxication with 20 g of phenytoin. The authors suggested that the hypoglycaemic episode might be attributable either to an escape from the inhibitory effects of phenytoin on insulin secretion or an increased sensitivity of the tissues to insulin. The striking finding of our case is that the hypoglycaemia is induced by a therapeutic dose of phenytoin, and, to our knowledge, this is the first case of severe hypoglycaemia during treatment with phenytoin for status epilepticus. In this case we have indeed excluded a different aetiology of the hypoglycaemia. In particular, a possible effect on glycemia produced by status epilepticus, has been considered not relevant, because the status epilepticus was partial and resolved nine hours before the onset of hypoglycaemia. However, what caused hypoglycaemia when a therapeutic dose of phenytoin was administrated is unclear, and further studies are needed to fully investigate the effects of phenytoin on carboidar metabolism.

G Di Gennaro, P P Quarato, G B Colazza, A Mascia, F Mari, M Manfredi
IRCCS “NEUROMED”, Pozzilli [IS], Italy and Department of Neurological Sciences, University of Rome “La Sapienza”, Rome, Italy

Correspondence to: Dr G Di Gennaro, IRCCS Neuromed, via Atinense, no 18, 86077, Pozzilli [IS], Italy, g.digenaro@neuromed.it

References

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Meta-analysis of α synuclein/NACP polymorphism in Parkinson’s disease in Japan

α Synuclein is a presynaptic protein highly and broadly expressed in the brain but its normal function is unknown. The protein is also termed non-amyloid β component precursor (NACP) because of its localisation in amyloid plaques of Alzheimer’s disease. However, subsequent studies failed to confirm α synuclein as a component of the amyloid plaque. α Synuclein/NACP is now known to be a major component of Lewy bodies in Parkinson’s disease (PD). Joint mutations of the α synuclein gene found in three independent PD families suggest that α synuclein may participate in the aetiology of sporadic PD. To address this possibility, several groups reported case-control studies using a dinucleotide repeat polymorphism in the promoter region of the gene. The previous Japanese study by Izumi et al. found a tendency of a lower frequency of allele 1 in Japanese PD patients than in controls. To examine the trend of association, we performed a similar analysis in 165 PD patients and 155 healthy controls in Japan.

The patients with sporadic PD (97 women and 68 men, mean (SD) age 64 (9.6) years, mean age at onset 56 (11) years) had been under treatment at the neurological clinic of Utano National Hospital. The control group was matched for age (mean 63.0 (8.6) years), sex ratio (97 women and 58 men), and birth place (Kyoto and Osaka prefectures) with the PD patients. The controls were selected from the annual health examination at a city clinic. All participants were Japanese. The institutional ethics committees approved the study protocol and informed consent was obtained from each participant. The dinucleotide repeat polymorphism was analysed as reported. We identified five polymerase chain reaction products with different lengths and termed them according to Xia et al as follows: 253 bp, allele 0; 257 bp, allele 1; 261 bp, allele 2, and 263 bp, allele 3. Statistical analysis was performed by χ² test. The corrected p value (pc) was obtained by multiplying the p value by the number of alleles. As table 1 shows, in our study allele 1 tended to be less frequent in patients with PD than in controls (p = 0.042 for allele distribution and p = 0.012 for genotype distribution), although the difference was insignificant after correction by the number of alleles (p = 0.21 for allele distribution and pc = 0.072 for genotype distribution). This result was similar to the previous Japanese work. To increase the power of the Japanese PD control analysis, we combined our data with those of Izumi et al. The meta-analysis showed a significantly lower frequency of the allele 1 positive genotype in patients with PD than in controls even after correction (pc = 0.0044, odds ratio 0.61, 95%CI 0.45 to 0.81). These results suggest a negative association of allele 1 in PD in Japan.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Allele* frequency</th>
<th>Genotype frequency</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>-1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Present study</td>
<td>PD (n=165)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Controls (n=155)</td>
<td>0.013</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>χ²=9.93, df=4, p=0.042, pc=0.21</td>
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<tr>
<td>Izumi et al.</td>
<td>PD (n=200)</td>
<td>0.004</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Controls (n=250)</td>
<td>0.002</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>χ²=8.37, df=5, p=0.14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Combined</td>
<td>PD (n=365)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Controls (n=405)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>χ²=13.9, df=5, p=0.017, pc=0.099</td>
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</table>

* Nomenclature of the alleles according to Xia et al. Alleles 1, 2, and 3 correspond to alleles 3, 2, and 1, respectively, of Krüger et al. pc = 0.017 for allele distribution and pc = 0.099 for genotype distribution. OR 0.61, 95%CI 0.45 to 0.81


References