



Sparking the Fire: Viral Precipitation of Autoimmune Encephalitis



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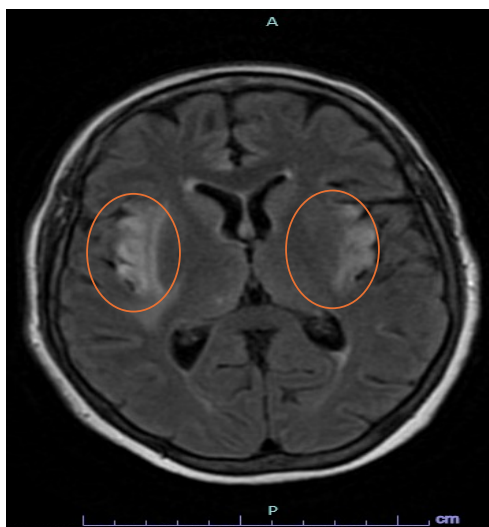
Introduction

- Post infectious autoimmune encephalitis (AE) is an increasingly common condition post COVID
- AE is known to cause flares of other underlying autoimmune issues though many may not have been previously diagnosed
- Our case highlights the close relation and need to be aware of the potential for flaring to avoid focusing on distracting signs or symptoms

Abstract

We present a 67yo white female, who initially presented with acute altered mental status, fevers and bullous skin lesions. PMH significant for DM2 and recent COVID infection. There was concern for sepsis from skin infection and broad-spectrum antibiotics were started. She also had a lumbar puncture performed which demonstrated a lymphocyte predominant leukocytosis though her infectious PCR was negative. Due to concern for worsening, acyclovir was started while awaiting an MRI. She had minimal improvement overall. MRI later resulted with significant limbic enhancement. These findings being much more indicative of autoimmune encephalopathy (AE) than infectious; however, testing of her CSF was completely negative of all AE drivers. She was started on high dose dexamethasone and had rapid improvement. She remained stable following conclusion of steroids and was discharged home.

Images



Discussion

- In many autoimmune encephalitis cases, no clear antibody is found
- Her rapid improvement with steroids gives validity to being an antibody negative disease of which may be known in the future
- AIBD can be associated with paraneoplastic syndromes, which is a strong trigger of autoimmune encephalitis, however there was no correlation appreciated in the literature

Conclusion

- Flaring of underlying autoimmune conditions can cause clinicians to focus on red herring symptoms which may delay treatment
- Connections to autoimmune blistering disease (AIBD) flaring with encephalitis is not well documented. A case series from Emory was able to find 3 AE with concurrent AIBD.
- Physicians should be aware that other autoimmune conditions can be sparked by viral illnesses

References

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