Unilateral Primary CNS Vasculitis in a Child Associated with Increased ICP and Treated with Maximal Medical Therapy and Decompressive Hemicraniectomy

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Objective
- We present a case of a 6-year-old boy with new-onset seizures and altered mental status associated with multifocal right hemispheric lesions resulting from primary CNS vasculitis.
- Unique features of the case including unilateral involvement and aggressive medical and surgical management are discussed.

Background
- Primary CNS vasculitis or primary angiitis of the CNS (PACNS) is a rare vascular inflammatory brain disease, often associated with variable neurological manifestations and a lengthy diagnostic evaluation.
- Secondary causes of CNS vasculitis and other inflammatory brain disorders must be excluded and a definite diagnosis relies on tissue biopsy.
- Some forms of PACNS can be rapidly progressive and life-threatening, further complicating the diagnostic and treatment process.

Methods
- Case report featuring clinical presentation, laboratory, pathology, and neuroimaging results, and discussion of diagnostic/treatment decision-making.

Results
- A 6-year-old previously healthy boy with intermittent headaches developed focal seizures and altered mentation.
- CSF showed marked pleocytosis (WBC 139 cells/mm3) and elevated protein (299 mg/dL). IgG index 0.93, 0 oligoclonal bands, AQP4, MOG negative.
- MRI brain demonstrated multifocal areas of T2 hyperintense signal, restricted diffusion, and microhemorrhage involving the deep and superficial white matter of the right hemisphere.
- He underwent decompressive hemicraniectomy and open brain biopsy showing perivascular lymphocytic cuffing and lymphocytes in the vessel walls, interpreted as vasculitis with white matter infarction and hemorrhage, consistent with PACNS.
- Despite maximal osmotic, sedative, and immune-directed therapies, he exhibited worsening cerebral edema and midline shift with persistently elevated intracranial pressures.
- He underwent decompressive hemicraniectomy and open brain biopsy showing perivascular lymphocytic cuffing and lymphocytes in the vessel walls, consistent with PACNS.
- He exhibited worsened cerebral edema and midline shift with persistently elevated intracranial pressures.
- He was treated with cyclophosphamide with gradual improvement in cerebral edema.
- He underwent cranioplasty four weeks after hemicraniectomy (Hospital Day 37).
- His left hemiparesis improved significantly over one month in inpatient rehabilitation and he regained the ability to ambulate independently.

Conclusions / Discussion
- Our case demonstrates an unusual presentation of PACNS in a child given unilateral involvement and fulminant course.
- Hemicraniectomy should be considered in patients with medically refractory increased intracranial pressure, as it can cause irreversible morbidity and mortality.
- Management of this child involved a multidisciplinary team of providers and complex diagnostic and therapeutic decision-making, ultimately resulting in a favorable outcome.

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