

Pseudobulbar Affect Seen in a Patient with Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis

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Case Diagnosis

Pseudobulbar Affect seen in a 72 year old female who was recently diagnosed Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis.

Case Description

72 year old female with a past medical history hypertension, type two diabetes mellitus, anxiety, and a new onset of Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis of three months duration was admitted to acute rehabilitation for worsening lower extremity weakness and increased dependence from others in her activities of daily living. Throughout her acute rehabilitation admission, she presented with uncontrollable episodes of sudden, inappropriate laughing and crying. The diagnosis of pseudobulbar affect was made after an MRI of the brain without contrast was performed and results were negative to rule out other pathology. She was started on Nuadexta, a Food and Drug Administration approved medication for the treatment of pseudobulbar affect. Nuadexta is the combination of dextromethorphan and quinidine, and is taken twice per day for a total of seven days. She improved clinically, feeling less embarrassed, and better able to control her emotions.

Discussion

Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis is a debilitating disease of the motor neuron. It causes progressive degeneration of the upper and lower motor neurons with associated muscle atrophy, fasciculations, spasticity, and hyperreflexia. Not only are patients with Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis affected physically due to their motor deficits, many times the disease can be emotionally taxing. It is essential to monitor the patient's overall clinical assessment, not to miss an opportunity to aid in their psychological support.

Conclusion

In conclusion, pseudobulbar affect can be seen in neurological conditions and injuries including Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis. Antidepressants such as tricyclic antidepressants and selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors can help reduce the frequency of the emotional outbursts but Nuadexta is the only medication approved by the Food and Drug Administration that is designed to treat Pseudobulbar affect.

Resources:

1. Garnock-Jones KP. Dextromethorphan/quinidine: in pseudobulbar affect. CNS Drugs. 2011 May;25(5):435-45. doi: 10.2165/11207260-000000000-00000. PMID: 21476614.