Short reports

Excessive libido in a woman with rabies

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Summary

Rabies is endemic in India in both wildlife and humans. Human rabies kills 25 000 to 30 000 persons every year. Several types of sexual manifestations including excessive libido may develop in cases of human rabies. A laboratory proven case of rabies in an Indian woman who manifested excessive libido is presented below. She later developed hydrophobia and died.

Keywords: rabies, libido

In India, transmission by stray dogs and occasionally by chronic canine excretor causes the majority of cases of rabies in man.¹ Approximately 25 000 to 30 000 persons die of rabies every year. Diverse sexual manifestations have been described in rabies in recent years. In some patients excessive libido may be the only presenting symptom. Excessive libido manifested in an Indian woman is reported below.

Case report

A married Indian woman aged 28 years suddenly developed excessive sexual desire. This continued for three days. Her husband was very much surprised at such abnormal behaviour. He had never noticed such behaviour during nine years of married life. Systemic examination of the patient revealed no abnormality. She was fully conscious and alert mentally; no neurological deficit was observed. Routine laboratory investigations were noncontributory. Three days later she developed hydrophobia and died seven days after the onset of symptoms. She had been

bitten by a stray dog two months earlier. Immune status and whereabouts of the dog were not known. She had not received any post-exposure prophylactic vaccination. On clinical and epidemiological grounds, a diagnosis of rabies was certain. *Post-mortem* examination revealed the presence of Negri bodies in brain tissues which confirmed the diagnosis.

Discussion

In endemic countries most cases of rabies in man are diagnosed after manifestation of hydrophobia, a symptom which characterises the classical form of rabies. Sexual manifestations occasionally develop due to involvement of the limbic system (amygdaloid nuclear complex, hippocampus, parahippocampal gyrus, gyrus cinguli, and pre-pyiform areas) which is responsible for control of visceral activity, emotional and sexual behaviour.

Priapism was the sole presenting manifestation in some patients.^{2,3} However, priapism may also develop in conditions other than rabies, like sickle cell disease, leukaemia, Rocky-mountain spotted fever and sometimes in Wilson's disease. It has also been reported during the course of malaria.⁴ Penile hyperexcitability with erection and ejaculation on the slightest touch of the penis was reported in a 56-year-old Indian patient with rabies.⁵ Increased libido was also reported in a Burmese patient in whom diagnosis of rabies was confirmed by detection of Negri bodies in brain tissues after autopsy.⁶ The symptom has been reported in both sexes.

If a physician is unaware of these manifestations of rabies, diagnosis may be delayed or missed and the medical and other attendants may be exposed to unnecessary risk.

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