

Wernicke`s Encephalopathy in Anorexia Nervosa

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Abstract: Wernicke`s Encephalopathy is an acute neuropsychiatric syndrome resulting from thiamine deficiency (vitamin B₁) associated with significant morbidity and mortality. It has classically been described by the triad of altered mental status, ophthalmoplegia, and ataxia. It has traditionally been associated with alcoholism but it may also occur in patients with subacute or chronic conditions that increase metabolic demand or cause significant malnutrition.

Anorexia nervosa (AN) is a psychiatric disease that often begins in adolescence, with a prevalence of about 0.5% in the world population. Presents the highest mortality rate among psychiatric diseases which can partly be justified by multiple organic complications associated with severe states of malnutrition.

The authors describe a clinical case of Wernicke's Encephalopathy in a 13-year-old girl with anorexia nervosa - restrictive type.

The diagnosis of Wernicke's Encephalopathy should be considered in anorexia nervosa whenever there is a mental status change, although all the symptoms of the classic triad are not present. The authors emphasize the importance of early treatment with thiamine and recommend universal supplementation for patients with anorexia nervosa that meet criteria for high risk of refeeding syndrome.

Keywords: Adolescent, Anorexia Nervosa/complications, Refeeding Syndrome, Thiamine Deficiency, Wernicke Encephalopathy/diagnosis



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