Büyük Eksikliği ile Subakut Kombin Bireşasyonun Birlikte Görüldüğü Atipik Bir Vaka
An Atypical Case of Subacute Combined Degeneration With Concomitant Copper Deficiency
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ÖZ
Sonuç: B12 vitamini tedavisine yanıttsız miyelopatide büyük eksikliğini göz önünde bulundurmak önemli
Anahtar Kelimeler: subakut kombine dejerasyon, B12 vitamini eksikliği, büyük eksikliği

ABSTRACT
Background: Subacute combined degeneration (SCD) is a neurodegenerative disease caused by cobalamin deficiency. It is can be accompanied by other neurological, psychiatric, hematological and gastrointestinal symptoms. Here we describe a patient with subacute combined degeneration who has vitamin B12 and copper deficiency.
Case Description: 74-year-old woman was admitted to our physical medicine and rehabilitation department complaining of weakness in both legs and inability to walk. She had marked loss of strength in both lower extremities also dysmetria and dysdiadochokinesia tests were positive on left-side. Vibration, position sense, two-point discrimination were impaired in the lower extremities. Her vitamin B12 was replaced before admission to our department. Patient’s symptoms kept progressing despite the vitamin replacement. Her spinal MRI showed no compression of spinal cord or myelopathy. The needle EMG findings revealed a decrease in motor unit recruitment. Upper gastrointestinal endoscopy revealed chronic atrophic gastritis which is compatible with B12 deficiency. Her blood copper level was low. Oral copper was added to the treatment. Patient evaluated on 6th and 9th months after discharge. Her functional state was similar with previous visit.
Conclusion: It is important to consider copper deficiency in patients with myelopathy who are unresponsive to vitamin B12 treatment

Key words: subacute combined degeneration, vitamin B12 deficiency, copper deficiency

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INTRODUCTION

Subacute combined degeneration (SCD) is a neurodegenerative disease caused by cobalamin deficiency. It can be accompanied by other neurological, psychiatric, hematological and gastrointestinal symptoms (1). Malabsorption, malnutrition and a genetic deficiency of the methylmalonyl-Coa mutase can give rise to vitamin B12 deficiency (2). Subacute combined degeneration after nitrous oxide exposure due to anesthesia and nitrous oxide abuse is also reported in rare cases(3,4).

Additionally, copper deficiency may present with neurologic deficits similar to that is seen in patients with subacute combined degeneration (5). Copper deficiency may also involve multiple organ systems. It has hematological, neurological and cardiovascular effects(6). Copper deficiency reported to have a range of neurological manifestations such as myelopathy, peripheral neuropathy(7).

Here we describe a patient with subacute combined degeneration who has vitamin B12 and copper deficiency.

CASE REPORT

A 74-year-old woman was admitted to our department in December, 2015 with weakness in both legs and inability to walk. She reported progressive weakness and balance problems over 5 years. The patient was examined in neurology department and diagnosed as subacute combined degeneration due to vitamin B12 deficiency before admission. The patient also diagnosed as essential thrombocytosis 5 years ago. Her medical and surgical history was unremarkable. Upon examination, she was alert and well oriented. Her mental status was normal but her rate of speech was slow. Her upper extremity muscle strength was normal but the motor exam showed power of 4-/5 in lower extremities. She exhibited marked spasticity on hip adductors. Neurological examination revealed dysmetria and dysdiadochokinesia on left-side. Deep tendon reflexes were normoactive bilaterally in upper extremities while patellar and ankle reflexes were increased symmetrically. Vibration, position sense, two-point discrimination were impaired over the lower limbs. On sensory examination she reported having hypoesthesia on distal lower limb but did not adress a certain dermatome. Babinski sign were present on both sides. She denied having fecal incontinence but she reported urge urinary incontinence. The patient was able to sit when assisted, however she had difficulty in sitting unsupported. Peripheral pulses were palpable. Lower extremity venous and arterial doppler sonography was normal. Grade 2-3 hepatic steatosis and increase trabeculations in bladder were detected on abdominal ultrasonography. Laboratory investigations revealed macrocytic anemia( Hgb:11.2 g/dl (N:12-16), Mcv:120.7 fl (N:80.7-95.5),Mch:37.8 pg (N:27.2-33.5)), lack of vitamin D (25-OH D vitamin:12.43 (n:30-100)) and mild hypertriglyceridemia (Triglyceride: 231 (N:0-200)). Blood tests showed a low serum vitamin B12 level of 87 pg/ml. Vitamin B12 level became 299 pg/ml after replacement ( N:126.6-505) . Additionally, her serum folic acid level and plasma homocystein level was normal. Weekly 50,000 IU VIT D-3 replacement started in terms of vitamin D deficiency. Physical examination and laboratory results were consistent with subacute combined degeneration secondary to vitamin B12 deficiency. But her neurological condition continued to deteriorate despite the cobalamin replacement. To this end, brain MRI, cerebrospinal fluid(CSF) flow MRI and whole spinal MRI were performed. Spinal MRI showed discal herniation but no compression of spinal cord or myelopathy was detected (figure 1,2,3).

Figure 1. Spinal MRI T2 sagittal imaging (cervical part)
Cerebral and cerebellar atrophy was seen on brain MRI (figure 4, 5). CSF flow MRI was normal. EMG findings were normal except a decrease in motor unit recruitment. Upper gastrointestinal endoscopy revealed chronic atrophic gastritis which is compatible with B12 deficiency. The serum copper level was 79.7 mg / dL (N79-155) and ceruloplasmin level was 18.4 mg / dL (N: 20-60), and 24-hour urine copper was 8.7 (N 3 - 35). Oral copper supplements has been added to the treatment. The patient was discharged after 27 sessions of physical therapy and rehabilitation program, and was advised continuing program in an outpatient setting. Patient evaluated on 6th and 9th months after discharge. Her functional state was similar with previous visits.

DISCUSSION
Cobalamine is a cofactor for two enzymes that is present in mammalian cells: mitochondrial l-methylmalonyl-coenzyme A (CoA) mutase (MCM) and cytoplasmic homocysteine methyltransferase(8). These enzymes are important for DNA and cell metabolism so a deficiency of Vitamin B12 may give rise to disruption of DNA related and cellular mechanisms that results in serious clinical consequences.

Vitamin B12 deficiency may manifest in multiple organ systems and it is defined as plasma or serum vitamin b12 concentration lower than 148 pmol/L (200 pg/mL) (9). Serum (or less commonly, urinary) methylmalonic acid (MMA), total homocysteine, holotranscobalamin can also be used for diagnosing this vitamin deficiency (10). SCD patients may have normal or elevated serum B12 levels which is termed “functional vitamin B12 deficiency”.

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It has been reported that SCD patients with normal or elevated serum B12 levels had abnormal transcobalamin (TC), a factor that plays a role in cellular uptake of B12. Transcobalamin deficiency causes megaloblastic anemia in infants with normal cobalamin concentrations. Vitamin B12 deficiency may be secondary to vitamin B12 intake, autoimmune disorders, gastric surgery malabsorption and drugs (11). Deficiency state results in decreased activity of cobalamin-dependent methylcobalamin esterase enzyme with the resultant elevated levels of methylmalonic acid, which is toxic to myelin (12).

The bone marrow is most commonly affected system due to vitamin B12 deficiency. Anaemia may range from mild to severe, with symptoms of fatigue, dyspnea, palpitations, and pallor. All cell lines can be affected, with macrocytic anaemia, low white cell count or neutropenia, and thrombocytopenia (13). Neurologically it affects the spinal cord, peripheral nerves, optic nerve, and brain (14,15). Patients may present sensory abnormalities, weakness, gait ataxia or cognitive impairment (16).

Subacute combined degeneration is a progressive myelopathy that can be associated with neurologic deficits such as sensory abnormalities, ascending paresthesias, weakness, ataxia, loss of sphincter control, and gait disturbances (17,18,19). According to a study which documents 23 cases with SCD, all patients gradually displayed limb weakness, gait ataxia, mental disorders or cognitive impairment, blurred vision, defecation abnormalities or impotence and other symptoms. Their data showed that the patients’ chief complaints and neurological signs were not totally consistent and the neurological signs might be more apparent than symptoms. Apart from the neurological and hematological involvement, cobalamin deficiency can result in skin changes, reproductive system disturbances, osteoporosis and rarely cardiomyopathy (13).

MRI may be helpful for the diagnosis of subacute combined degeneration. Typically the T2WI demonstrates hyperintense lesions in the posterior column (with inverted V sign), rarely lateral column and brain stem may also be affected.

Lesions typically exist on cervical and upper thoracic part of the spinal cord. On MRI, several patterns were described: focal or small cord lesions involving few contiguous levels, extensive linear abnormalities and scattered small multifocal lesions (19). Although unusual, cases with anterior cord involvement has been described (20). In a study which includes a total 54 patients with biochemically proven vitamin B12 deficiency, MRI showed cord signal abnormality in only 8 patients out of 54 patients with low sensitivity of 14.8% (21). Jaisi et al reported 26.09% (6/23) of thier patients were found having spinal cord lesions on MRI, where as 82.00% reported by Locatelli et al (22). The patient herein described also had no MRI abnormality targeting myelopathy. The reasons why there is no MRI finding maybe as follows: first, MRI changes may lag after the onset of clinical symptoms. Second, conventional MRI has poor sensitivity to detect microstructural changes in SCD, for this reason diffusion tensor imaging is a good alternative (21). Lastly, MRI damages of SCD are not present in every patient.

Standard initial treatment is 1000 μg hydroxocobalamin intramuscularly three times a week for two weeks in patients without neurological involvement. If there are neurological symptoms, according to the British National Formulary recommendations 1000 μg hydroxocobalamin intramuscularly on alternate days should be continued for two weeks until there is no further improvement (23).

A study of 57 cases with subacute combined degeneration reported that After initiation of B12 therapy, 49 (86%) patients improved and 8 (14%) had complete resolution of signs and symptoms (19).

Copper deficiency may also involve multiple organ systems. It has hematological, neurological and cardiovascular effects (6). Copper deficiency reported to have a range of neurological manifestations such as myelopathy, peripheral neuropathy (7). Patients may present with sensory ataxia due to copper deficiency myelopathy which represents an often underdiagnosed, acquired neurological syndrome (24). Similar to subacute combined degeneration, copper deficiency...
myelopathy is characterized by posterior column dysfunction. The known causes of the copper deficiency include gastrointestinal surgery, malabsorption, excessive zinc ingestion, overuse of zinc-containing denture adhesive or iron overload (25,26). Oftentimes no exact etiology can be revealed. Our patient has sensory ataxia and peripheral neuropathic symptoms which is consistent with both CDM and SCD. Her symptoms were progressing under vitamin B12 treatment. After initiating oral copper supplements her functional level was similar with previous visit.

In conclusion, it is important to consider copper deficiency in patients with myelopathy who is unresponsive to vitamin B12 treatment.

REFERENCES


