Ramsay Hunt syndrom sine herpete

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Introduction: Herpes zoster oticus, or Ramsay Hunt syndrome, is an infection caused by Varicella zoster virus (VZV). The disease occurs due to the reactivation of VZV in the geniculate ganglion of the seventh cranial nerve, with possible spreading to the eighth and, in rare cases, the ninth and tenth cranial nerves. Vesicular rash on the auricle and external auditory canal, ipsilateral facial nerve palsy, and otalgia constitute the classic Ramsay Hunt triad. Additional symptoms often include sensorineural hearing loss and vestibular disturbances. We present the case of a patient with an atypical form of the disease without characteristic vesicles, known as herpes zoster sine herpete. Case report: A 52-year-old male presented to the Emergency ENT Clinic with rotatory vertigo, nausea, right ear pain, and weakness on the right side of the face, preventing him from closing his eye. The patient also reported pre-existing right-sided hearing loss. The clinical examination revealed a normal bilateral otoscopy and no skin changes in the auricle or external auditory canal. The patient exhibited a left-beating rotatory nystagmus grade II according to Alexander, and the Head Impulse Test (HIT) was positive on the right side, suggesting vestibular neuritis. Additionally, there was right-sided peripheral facial nerve palsy grade III on the House-Brackmann scale. Inflammatory markers were normal, and an urgent brain MSCT revealed no acute lesions. Peripheral neuritis of the right vestibular nerve was confirmed by vHIT, which showed reduced gains on the right side: DP 0.60, DA 0.32, DL 0.46, LP 0.76, LA 0.77, LL 0.81. Pure tone audiometry (PTA) revealed normal hearing up to 2 kHz, with bilateral sensorineural hearing loss in high frequencies up to 60 dB. Serological testing confirmed the presence of VZV-specific IgM antibodies, establishing the diagnosis of herpes zoster sine herpete. The patient was treated with acyclovir in combination with high-dose corticosteroids and was discharged after several days following clinical improvement. Conclusion: Herpes zoster sine herpete is an atypical form of the Ramsay Hunt syndrome without vesicular rash. It should be considered in cases of peripheral facial palsy accompanied by ear pain or vestibular symptoms, as early treatment is crucial for the best possible outcome.

Key words: facial palsy, herpes zoster sine herpete, Ramsay Hunt syndrome