LANDAU KLEFFNER SYNDROME

Sir,

Acquired aphasia epilepsy syndrome is a rare disorder, first described by Landau and Kleffner (1957), which they called as a syndrome of acquired aphasia with convulsion. This neuropsychiatric syndrome is now included in ICD-10 under the category of specific developmental disorder of speech and language (F 80.3) (World Health organisation, 1992) and is also called as Landau Kleffner Syndrome. An 8 year old girl was referred to the Child

Guidance Clinic with history of loss of speech, convulsion and behavioural problems. According to the parents, she was born of a full term normal delivery and had acquired normal developmental milestones and language. At the age of 6 years, when she was studying in 1st standard, she had a right sided focal convulsion, with loss of consciousness and incontinence. Subsequently, in the following period of 2 years, she had 7 such convulsions at an interval of 2 to 4 months. After about 7 to 8 months of the first convulsion, a change in her speech was noticed. Initially it became less intelligible and gradually reduced to only a few words. She also gradually developed difficulty in understanding simple verbal commands. Along with this, it was also noticed that from time to time, the patient would become very restless and would wander away from her house. She also gradually lost the ability to carry out her daily living activities. There was no history of high grade fever, altered sensorium, or head injury prior to the onset of this illness. There were neither any symptoms of raised intracranial pressure nor any focal neurological deficit. Though, there was a history of gradual decline in language function and behaviour problems, there were no other symptoms of pervasive developmental disorders. During the observation in Child Guidance Clinic, it was noticed that she was very hyperactive, restless and unable to sit at one place. She was continuously doing some purposeless activity. She neither made any attempt to speak spontaneously nor she responded to any of the verbal commands. It was also noticed that intermittently she would suddenly stop doing whatever she was doing, stare blankly in the space, recover from this state after a couple of seconds and start doing whatever she was doing before as if nothing had happened. On physical and neurological examination, apart from decline in higher functions, no other neurological deficits were found. EEG showed spike and wave complexes at a frequency of 1-2 cycles per second occurring in long bursts throughout the record, predominantly in central and temporal leads. Audiometry and CT scan did not reveal any abnormality. Transient or permanent loss of speech and language function in children may be seen in a variety of psychiatric and neurological disorders. In the above mentioned case, the gradual loss of language function over a period of 2 years, convulsions, typical EEG pattern and absence of any other neurological abnormalities clinically, as well as on CT scan, suggested the diagnosis of a rare neuropsychiatric disorder called 'Landau Kleffner Syndrome'.

REFERENCES

Landau, W. M. & Kleffner F.R. (1957) Syndrome of acquired aphasia with convulsive disorder in children. *Neurology*, 7, 523-530.

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