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Late-onset congenital syphilis with unusual brain abnormalities

Sífilis congênita de início tardio com anormalidades encefálicas incomuns

Rodrigo Alencar e Silva[1], Camila Campelo[1], Clecio Godeiro-Junior[1]

A 17-year-old woman presented with ataxia, refractory epilepsy and progressive cognitive decline since the age of eight. A brain MRI showed white matter abnormalities and atrophy (Figures 1 and 2). Her mother had positive tests for syphilis in her prenatal screening, but had not received any treatment. In our patient, serum VDRL (1:16) and IgG-FTA-ABS were positive. Her cerebrospinal fluid showed a slight increase in protein level, negative VDRL and positive FTA-ABS tests. Our diagnosis was late congenital syphilis with atypical brain abnormalities. We should be aware of this disorder and include it in the differential diagnosis of subacute neurological syndromes with frontal and temporal lesions on brain MRI[1,2]..

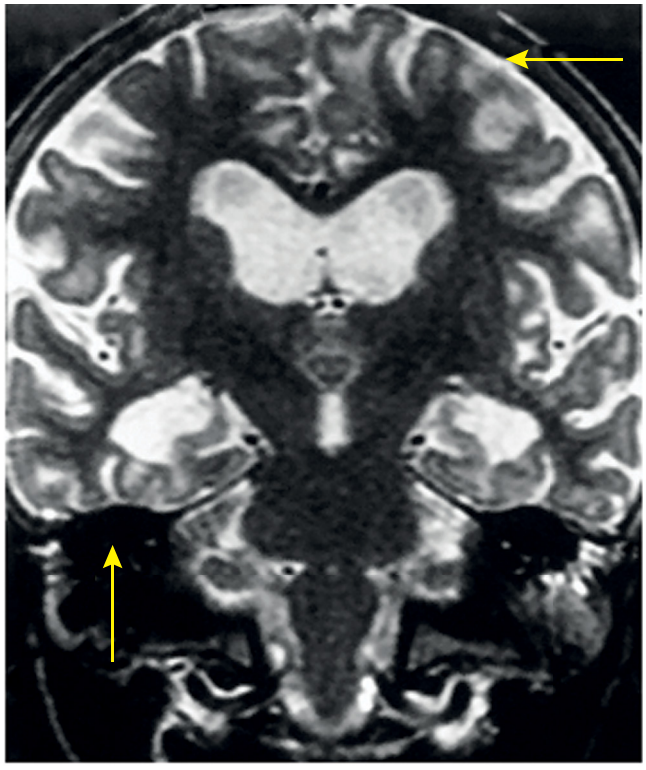

Figure 1. Coronal T2 MRI sequence: brain atrophy and hyperintensities of the temporal and frontal lobes

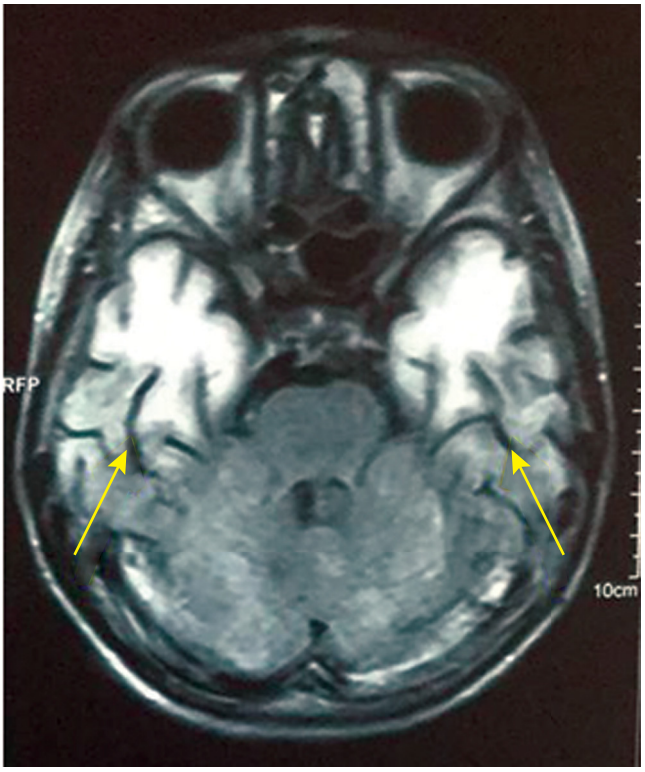

Figure 2. Axial Flair MRI sequence: marked hyperintensities of the anterior temporal lobes.

References

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[1]Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Norte, Hospital Universitário Onofre Lopes, Unidade de Distúrbios do Movimento, Natal RN, Brasil.
Correspondence: Rodrigo Alencar e Silva; Rua Henri Koster, 1029 / apt.1202; 59015-090 Natal RN, Brasil; E-mail: alencar-rodrigo@hotmail.com
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