Syphilis mimicking trigeminal schwannoma

Sífilis imitando schwannoma trigeminal

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A 20-year-old woman presented with a two-month history of temporal headache and right trigeminal nerve palsy. An MRI showed enlargement and contrast enhancement of the right trigeminal nerve, suggestive of a schwannoma (Figure A). Cerebrospinal fluid analysis disclosed: 10 cells/mm³, protein 76mg/dl, glucose 50mg/dl and positive Venereal Disease Research Laboratory test (VDRL).

Serum VDRL was 1/256 and the Treponema pallidum haemagglutination was positive. She was treated with IV crystalline penicillin G 2.400.000 U/day for 14 days with clinical and radiological improvement (Figure B).

Gummatous cranial nerve palsy is rarely reported 12 as the sole manifestation of syphilis, but should be considered in the differential diagnosis of nerve tumors.

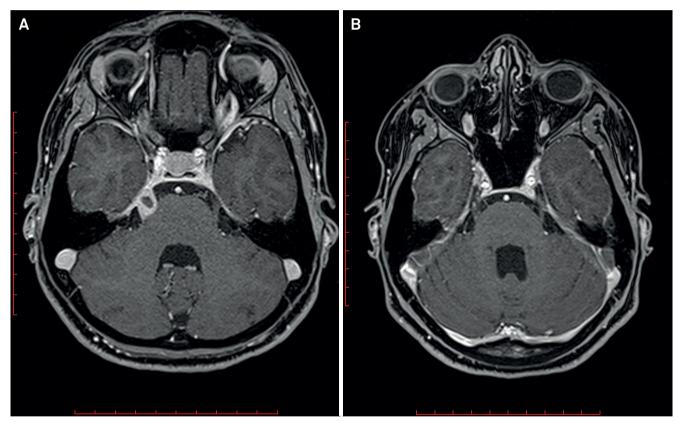


Figure. Axial T1-weighted brain MRI showing enlargement and contrast enhancement in the right trigeminal nerve (A) and resolution after treatment with crystalline penicillin G (B).

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