

SPA/APPA 2021 Virtual Meeting Medical Student/Resident Poster Presentation

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Abstract Title: Evaluation of Psychotic Symptoms in Patient with Underlying Partial Seizures

Presenting Authors/Affiliation: Sarah Elizabeth Bignault, MS-4: University of South Alabama College of Medicine

Additional Authors/Affiliations: Amy Hudson M.D., Praveen Narahari M.D.: AltaPointe

Introduction/Background: Psychosis is categorized by a group of symptoms that may include hallucinations, delusions, or disorganized thinking, speech and behavior. Primary psychosis is thought to be caused by a psychiatric disorder, whereas secondary psychosis is caused by a specific medical condition (4). Psychosis of epilepsy is a potential secondary cause in which underlying mechanisms are correlated with an existing seizure disorder (2). Epileptic psychoses are defined as either peri-ictal or interictal, depending on their timing compared to the occurrence of seizures. Peri-ictal psychosis may present before (preictal), during (ictal) or after seizures (postictal). These episodes have well-defined initial and final phases. Symptom duration is short and completely resolves, but peri-ictal psychosis can be a recurring condition (3). Peri-ictal psychosis can also be the result of an iatrogenic process to pharmacologic and/or surgical interventions (2).

Description: A 33-year-old male with no past psychiatric hospitalizations who is on disability due to partial seizures secondary to a traumatic brain injury at age 18 presents with worsening episodes of agitation and psychosis. Evaluation by the psychiatric team concluded the psychotic episodes were in the context of seizures and diagnosed him with psychotic disorder due to another medical condition. The seizures were well controlled with the addition of Lamictal by a neurologist before the patient was transferred to a psychiatric facility. The patient ceased having any psychotic or mood symptoms or behavioral issues since admission to the psychiatric hospital. They determined the patient had adequate insight into his condition and recommended outpatient follow up. However, an independent psychiatric evaluation suggested the diagnosis of bipolar disorder, manic with psychotic features, which led to the patient continuing in-patient hospitalization.

Discussion and Conclusion: This case highlights the complications involved in diagnosing psychiatric conditions in the context of underlying medical conditions. When psychotic symptoms are described as only occurring in the context of having a seizure, it is reasonable to conclude the events are correlated. However, according to the independent evaluation, focusing primarily on the seizure symptoms and timing could possibly result in oversights in the psychiatric evaluation.

References:

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