

PEDIATRIC NEUROLOGY BRIEFS

A MONTHLY JOURNAL REVIEW

J. GORDON MILLICHAP, M.D., F.R.C.P., EDITOR

Vol. 3, No. 5

May 1989

VASCULAR DISORDERS

CEREBRAL VASCULITIS AND DIET PILLS

A 17 year old girl who developed cerebral vasculitis and hemorrhage following the ingestion of an overdose of phenylpropanolamine diet-aid pills is reported from the Schneider Children's Hospital, Long Island Jewish Medical Center, New Hyde Park, New York. She developed headache and vomiting five hours after taking five diet-aid pills, equivalent to a total dose of 375 mg of phenylpropanolamine. Neurological examination showed early papilledema and minimal nuchal rigidity. A CT scan revealed a large right parieto-occipital hemorrhage with deviation of the midline to the left and deformation of the right lateral ventricle. Angiography showed beading of the branches of the right carotid, basilar, and both posterior cerebral arteries, compatible with bilateral cerebral vasculitis. Following craniotomy for the removal of the clot and treatment with dexamethasone, the patient recovered rapidly and neurological examination revealed only a left homonymous hemianopsia. (Forman HP et al. Cerebral vasculitis and hemorrhage in an adolescent taking diet pills containing phenylpropanolamine: Case report and review of the literature. Pediatrics May 1989; 83:737-741).

COMMENT. This case report was the eleventh documented example of phenylpropanolamine associated intracerebral hemorrhage with vasculitis. Necrotizing angitis has been described with abuse of drugs such as amphetamine, methamphetamine, and ephedrine. Intracerebral hemorrhage may also occur as a complication of over-the-counter diet pills even with recommended doses. The authors comment that this report should alert pediatricians to the potential use of nonprescription medications containing phenylpropanolamine, whenever unexplained acute cerebral symptoms are present.

PEDIATRIC NEUROLOGY BRIEFS @1989 covers selected articles from the world literature and is published monthly. Subscription requests (\$28 US or £15 UK annually; add \$5 (£3) for airmail outside North America) may be sent to: Pediatric Neurology Briefs - J. Gordon Millichap, M.D., F.R.C.P. - Editor, P.O. Box 11931, Chicago, IL 60611, USA, or P.O. Box 1605, London W8 7JD, UK. The Editor is Professor of Neurology and Pediatrics at Northwestern University Medical School, Chicago and is presently at SIU School of Medicine, Springfield, Illinois, USA.