

Ruptured intracranial dermoid cyst causing headache and meningism

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DESCRIPTION

An 88-year-old man with Parkinson's disease was admitted to the hospital with chronic epididymo-orchitis. During his admission, he had a fall and suffered a head injury, with no loss of consciousness, no urinary incontinence and no tongue biting. Shortly after, he developed a generalised headache with no other features of raised intracranial pressure. On examination, he was found to

have nuchal rigidity but no focal neurological deficits. He was afebrile with stable vital signs and neurological observations. Inflammatory markers and electrolytes were normal.

Axial CT showed multiple areas of low density (minus 42 Hounsfield units) in the frontal and temporal lobes (figure 1). No acute intracranial haemorrhage was detected. Subsequently, coronal T1-weighted MRI (figure 2A), coronal T2 fluid-attenuated inversion recovery MRI (figure 2B) and axial T2 MRI (figure 2C) showed multiple high-intensity foci dispersed around the parasellar region, sylvian fissures and left lateral ventricle, suggestive of extra-axial fat droplets. These findings are typical for a ruptured dermoid cyst.

The patient was managed conservatively with analgesia and his symptoms abated.

Intracranial dermoid cysts are slow-growing tumours that account for <0.5% of all primary



Figure 1 Axial non-contrast CT showing multiple low-density (minus 42 Hounsfield units) abnormalities (arrowed) in the frontal and temporal lobes, and in the parasellar region.

Learning points

- ▶ Dermoid cyst rupture is an uncommon cause of headache and meningism. Other presentations include seizures and hydrocephalus.
- ▶ Neuroimaging is important in patients presenting with headache and signs of meningism. The typical imaging appearance of a ruptured dermoid cyst on T1-weighted and T2-weighted MRI is of extra-axial hyperintense signal abnormalities distributed in the parasellar region.

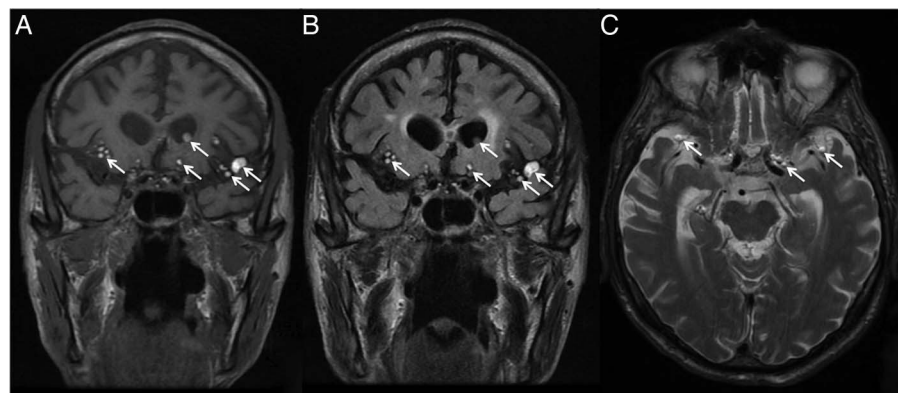


Figure 2 (A) Coronal MRI (T1 sequence) showing hyperintense signals (arrowed) in the parasellar region, sylvian fissures and left lateral ventricle. (B) Coronal T2 fluid-attenuated inversion recovery image showing hyperintense signals (arrowed) in a distribution corresponding to the T1 image along with bilateral periventricular areas of high signal best explained by small vessel disease. (C) Axial T2 image showing hyperintense signal (arrowed) in the parasellar region and anterior temporal lobes. These findings are consistent with extra-axial fat droplets.



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intracranial tumours.¹ They arise from ectopic ectoderm incorporated into the neural tube as it closes. Intact cysts can present with mass effects or as incidental findings on imaging. Rupture is a rare event that presents most often with headache or seizure but can also cause aseptic chemical meningitis or hydrocephalus.² Head trauma can precipitate rupture, as in this case, however, spontaneous rupture is more usual.³

Contributors CT and KM cowrote the article. AS interpreted the scans for our article. BG took care of the patient and oversaw the writing of the article.

Competing interests None declared.

Patient consent Obtained.

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