**THE MISSING ‘C’**

Scurvy: The Forgotten Cause Of Muscle Weakness In Children

**INTRODUCTION**

Hypovitaminosis C or commonly known as scurvy, is a historical disease, known since ancient Greek and Egyptian times, is often a forgotten cause of non traumatic weakness in children usually as a result of restrictive diet or socioeconomic implications.

**CASE REPORT**

We report the case of a 4-year-old boy with underlying autism spectrum disorder and a picky eater who presented to the ETD with an abnormal gait for the past one week. The child had to use his right leg to support his body to stand up from the bed. Otherwise, no trauma or other significant history.

Apart from short left stand phase antalgic gait and positive Gower’s sign, clinical examination was unremarkable. X-ray of bilateral lower limbs showed features of scurvy. Diagnosis of scurvy was made based on clinical presentation with radiographic evidence. Oral ascorbic acid was prescribed and symptoms improved. The child was discharged well with no further follow-up.

**DISCUSSION**

Due to the non-functional enzyme L-gulonolactone oxidase (GULO), humans are unable to synthesize ascorbic acid endogenously thus dependent on exogenous sources. This ultimately leads to impaired collagen synthesis and repair, resulting in abnormal cognitive tissue and bone formation. Multiple case reports has highlighted a possible correlation between neurodevelopmental disorders and scurvy such as autism and eating disorder, citing possible restrictive dietary habits as a cause of poor Vitamin C intake. Diagnosis is made clinically, supported by a thorough history and radiographic findings. Serum vitamin C concentration may be specific but remains insensitive in view readings can be skewed by recent vitamin C supplementation. Treatment is adequate vitamin C supplementation. Apart from muscle weakness as portrayed in this case, cutaneous manifestations such as easy bruising, ecchymosis, and gum bleeding are clinical presentations of scurvy.

**CONCLUSION**

Scurvy is rare but can be fatal if left untreated in any age group thus requiring a high degree of suspicion especially in those with neurodevelopmental disorders. Early diagnosis and prompt treatment with vitamin C supplements are essential for improving outcomes in these patients.

Keyword: Scurvy, Autism, Vitamin C

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