

Primary Cough Headache: A Case Report

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Abstract:

Primary cough headache is an uncommon condition characterized by episodes of sudden onset, bilateral headaches typically lasting from a second to two hours. Headaches are notably associated with Valsalva maneuvers such as coughing or straining in the absence of intracranial abnormalities. We report an unusual presentation of primary cough headache in a 53-year-old female suffering from episodes of severe sudden onset headaches that lasted several hours. The headaches were initially precipitated by coughing as is typical of primary cough headaches but were unusual in that the triggers for the episodes evolved over time. Headaches began occurring without association to any Valsalva maneuvers and ultimately occurred with no discernible trigger. The patient was initially prescribed Methylprednisolone, primarily to suppress the cough. Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), magnetic resonance angiography (MRA) of the brain, and a head CT scan were performed to rule out possible secondary causes such as a mass, intracranial bleed, aneurysms, or other vascular anomalies. The neurologist prescribed Indomethacin and Topiramate. After five days, the beta blocker Metoprolol Tartrate was prescribed as it was noted that the blood pressure was rising significantly in correlation to the headaches. The above treatment was effective in limiting the intensity and duration of the headaches and symptoms resolved after four weeks. This case contributes towards the understanding of the potential evolution of primary cough headache presenting with triggers unassociated with Valsalva maneuvers and ultimately occurring with no known trigger, as well as providing an example of PCH of an unusually long duration.