EUSEM
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EUSEM PRAGUE 2019 12-16 OCTOBER
THE EUROPEAN EMERGENCY MEDICINE CONGRESS

Sertraline induced acute dystonic reaction

Oğuz Eroğlu[1], Mustafa Karabulut[1], Sinan Oğuzhan Özsan[1], Sevilay Vural[2], Turgut Deniz[1]
[1]Department of Emergency Medicine, Kırıkkale University Faculty of Medicine, Kırıkkale, TURKEY
[2]Department of Emergency Medicine, Bozok University Faculty of Medicine, Yozgat, TURKEY

KIRIKKALE ÜNİVERSİTESİ 1992

Background: Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) are used in the treatment of many psychiatric disorders such as depression, anxiety disorder and obsessive-compulsive disorder. The common side effects of SSRIs are often symptoms of gastrointestinal tract such as nausea and vomiting. The neurological side effects especially on movement are rare. We present a case of oromandibular dystonia due to sertraline.

Case: A 24-year-old male patient was admitted to the emergency department with severe contractions on his face, jaw locking and difficulty in talking. The patient had a history of admitting to the psychiatry outpatient clinic for anxiety disorder and being prescribed Sertraline tablet (50 mg/day) a few days ago. His symptoms like tension in the facial muscles, contraction of the lip edges and jaw, locking and pain were occurred following the drug. There was no known chronic disease or concurrent prescription of medications. His vitals were fever: 36.5 ° C, pulse: 94 beats/min, blood pressure: 125/80 mmHg, respiratory rate: 18/min, $SatO_2$: 97% (in room air). The neurological examination revealed no additional pathology as complete blood count, electrolyte, liver and kidney function tests were normal. It was assumed as acute Sertraline-induced dystonic reaction (oromandibular dystonia) due to new onset of the symptoms and the absence of similar complaints before. Biperidene 5 mg was injected intramuscularly. Approximately 15 minutes after the injection, the patient's symptoms were completely relieved. He was discharged with the recommendation of stopping the medication and referred to his psychiatrist.

Discussion: Acute dystonic reaction is an extrapyramidal side effect that occurs suddenly with involuntary muscle contractions and abnormal posture (such as torticollis, retrocollis, opistotonus) starting from the neck, jaw, face, or tongue muscles. It is especially related with the use of drugs acting on dopamine and serotonin receptors. Oromandibular dystonia is a type of acute focal dystonia, characterized by repetitive and uncontrolled contractions, affecting the lower jaw, the lower half of the face and the muscles around the mouth. When contractions involve a masticatory muscle, speech and chewing functions may be impaired due to jaw locking. Movement disorders (akathisia, dystonia, parkinsonism, tardive dyskinesia and bruxism) due to SSRI use has been underreported. Most of the reported cases related with Fluoxetine or Paroxetine.

Conclusion: It should be remembered that Sertraline is a commonly used SSRI group drug and may cause oromandibular dystonia.