Clinical Reminders

Cerebral abscesses—a stroke mimic

A 76-year-old lady was admitted to our unit with sepsis secondary to community-acquired pneumonia. During her admission she became confused and a CT brain scan revealed an acute infarct (Figure 1a). She was therefore referred to a stroke unit for optimal treatment. Two weeks later she developed seizures and suffered an abrupt onset of dysphasia. A further stroke was suspected but contrast CT scan revealed multiple cerebral abscesses in the area of the initial suspected stroke (Figure 1b).

Cerebral abscesses are difficult to diagnose and they often mimic cerebral infarcts. Although the abscesses may have been a complication of the infarct [1], it is more likely that the initial CT showed early cerebral abscess formation rather than ischaemic changes. The need for having a high index of suspicion for cerebral abscess formation is necessary for early diagnosis, initiation of effective treatment [2] and prevention of significant morbidity and death.

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Concomitant oesophageal perforation and bleeding due to a tiny pill with its blister pack

A 73-year-old lady swallowed a pill with its plastic blister pack and came to attention due to vomiting and crepitation in the neck. Alzheimer's disease was noted from the history. Direct roentgenogram showed free air in the cervical region compatible with oesophageal perforation. Upper endoscopy due to haematemesis was performed and a major erosive point in the cardiac was bleeding. Endoscopic sclerotherapy was performed and the bleeding subsided. The pill with its plastic coverage was extracted with a grasping forceps while assisting with the overtube to protect the esophagus from the sharp edge (Figure). Caregivers should be cautious for not administering the pill with blister pack to mentally impaired patients. Any drug covered with a plastic or aluminum blister can turn into a very sharp object putting the mentally impaired patients to a very dangerous clinical situation if the necessary measures not undertaken.

Figure. The endoscopic image was taken while the pill extracted from the stomach with a grasping forceps.