VISCERAL PRECIPITATION OF EPILEPSY RELATED TO EATING

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This paper draws attention to a rare form of reflex epilepsy where eating is the trigger-stimulus. Of 21 patients with this disorder seen by us during 1978 – 1982, 17 were males. The age at onset ranged from 8 – 25 years (mean 16.4, SD 4.3). In 12 patients the fits occurred only in relation to eating; in the rest, more than 70% of the fits were induced by eating. Lunch and dinner were the meals responsible. Of the two meals, the dinner had a greater influence in precipitating fits in one-third of the cases. The fits occurred within 15 minutes of starting the meal in all the cases. In half the cases the onset was within 5 minutes. The epileptogenecity could not be traced to any particular food item.

The type of fits experienced by the patients were: grand mal in 50%, temporal lobe epilepsy in 25% and a combination in 25%. The interictal EEG features were consistent with: primary generalised epilepsy in 10%, focal epilepsy in 20% and non-specific in 20%.

Reports of visceral precipitation of epilepsy are few(1) and many(2,3) are based on less than 10 cases. The present series of 21 cases detected over a four year period raise the possibility that eating epilepsy may have a higher prevalence in countries such as ours where the food habits largely differ from those of the Western world.

References

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