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Incidence and Types of Pediatric Nystagmus

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Abstract

Purpose: To report the incidence, prevalent subtypes and clinical characteristics of pediatric nystagmus diagnosed over a 30-year period.

Design: Retrospective, population-based study

Methods: Using the Rochester Epidemiology Project, the medical records of all children (<19 years) diagnosed as residents in Olmsted County, Minnesota with any form of nystagmus from January 1, 1976, through December 31, 2005, were reviewed.

Results: Seventy-one children were diagnosed during the 30-year period, yielding an annual incidence of 6.72 per 100,000 younger than 19 years (95% confidence interval [CI], 5.15-8.28). Infantile nystagmus, onset by 6 months, comprised 62(87.3%) of the study patients, corresponding to a birth prevalence of 1 in 821. The median age at diagnosis for the cohort was 12.7 months (range, 0 days to 18.6 years) and 42(59.2%) were male. The main types of nystagmus, in declining order, were: nystagmus associated with retinal/optic nerve disease in 23(32.4%), idiopathic or congenital motor nystagmus in 22(31.0%), manifest latent nystagmus or latent nystagmus in 17(24.0%), and 2(2.8%) each associated with Chiari malformation, medication use, tumor of the CNS and no diagnosis. Developmental delay was diagnosed in 31(43.6%), strabismus in 25(40.3%), and amblyopia in 10(25.6%). Eighty percent had 20/40 (or equivalent) or better vision at presentation in at least one eye.

Conclusions: This study provides population-based data on incidence and clinical characteristics of childhood nystagmus in North America. Idiopathic and nystagmus associated with retinal/optic nerve disease were the most common presentations with most patients having good vision. Developmental delay, strabismus, and amblyopia were common in this cohort.

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