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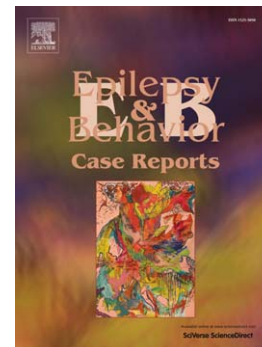
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Emotional stimuli-provoked seizures potentially misdiagnosed as psychogenic non-epileptic seizures: A case of temporal lobe epilepsy with amygdala enlargement in a middle-aged patient

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Abstract

The association between emotional stimuli and temporal lobe epilepsy (TLE) is largely unknown. Here, we report the case of a depressive, 50-year-old female complaining of episodes of a “spaced out” experience precipitated by emotional stimuli. Psychogenic non-epileptic seizures were suspected. However, video-EEG coupled with emotional stimuli-provoked procedures and MRI findings of amygdala enlargement, led to the diagnosis of left TLE. Accurate diagnosis and explanation improved her subjective depression and seizure frequency. This case demonstrated that emotional stimuli can provoke seizures in TLE and suggested the involvement of the enlarged amygdala and the modulation of emotion-related neural circuits.

1. Introduction

Psychogenic non-epileptic seizures (PNES) are paroxysmal behaviors that resemble epileptic seizures [3,19]. In contrast with epileptic seizures, PNES are not associated with excessive or hypersynchronous discharge in the brain [14]. PNES constitute one of the most important differential diagnoses of refractory epilepsy because the management of PNES as epileptic seizures can lead to significant iatrogenic harm [19]. In addition, PNES pose a substantial burden on patients, their families, and the healthcare system [1]. Video-EEG (VEEG) remains the gold standard diagnostic tool for PNES and/or epilepsy by allowing clinicians to perform a confident and reliable diagnosis [2,14].

The diagnosis of PNES is challenging because PNES and epileptic seizures share many similar features [3]. While PNES are often triggered by emotional stimuli, recent studies demonstrated that emotional stimuli are also exacerbating factors for patients with intractable epileptic seizures [6,17]. However, the association between emotional stimuli and temporal lobe epilepsy (TLE) is largely unknown. We present a case of emotional stimuli-provoked seizures of TLE with amygdala enlargement (AE), which can easily be misdiagnosed as PNES. Further, we discuss the mechanisms associated with emotional stimuli and AE.

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