

Seizure-Induced Purpura: A Rare but Useful Clue

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Thoraco-cervicofacial purpura has been occasionally reported in individuals with normal platelet counts and function following an acute increase of intrathoracic pressure, for example in cases of coughing, vomiting [1], or abrupt thoracic compression [2]. In the appropriate clinical context, this phenomenon has been found to be a specific, albeit rare, indicator of general tonic clonic seizures [3–5].

A characteristic image of seizure-induced purpura is illustrated here. This 47 year old man, 2 years post-craniotomy, had been seizure free since the initiation of phenytoin treatment more than a year prior to the present event. He had been found lying on the floor, without any witness to the circumstances that brought him to that state. He gradually recovered full consciousness within an hour but had no memory of the preceding clinical event. A petechial purpura was apparent over the clavicalae, superior aspects of both shoulders, neck and face. The medical history, clinical course, and creatine kinase elevation in the serum were suggestive of a general tonic clonic seizure. The dermatologic finding with an appearance and pattern characteristic of seizure-induced purpura, together with

a normal platelet count, served to consolidate the diagnosis of an episode of breakthrough seizures.

References

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The remarkable thing about my mother is that for thirty years she served us nothing but leftovers. The original meal has never been found.

Anonymous