Achondroplasia: Brain and Skull Manifestations on MRI Brain

Dr Arjun Narula 1st, Dr Aditya Chaudhary 2nd, Dr Apoorv Narula 3rd, Dr Nikhil Bansal 4th, Dr Hemant Kumar Mishra 5th

Abstract: Achondroplasia is the most common cause of congenital dwarfism. It is autosomal dominant disturbance in epiphyseal chondroblastic growth and maturation (1). Patients are of normal intelligence. Usually they have normal motor function. However a few present with mild to moderate motor symptoms. Not all patients present with neurological findings and hence MRI is usually not done. As skull base forms by enchondral ossification, its growth can be affected with increasing age, leading to stenosis of the foramen magnum, that can cause compression over medulla/cervical cord. We present a case of 12 month old girl child who presented to the pediatric OPD with chief complaints of difficulty in walking. The patient was subjected to clinical examination & conventional radiological investigations which revealed rhizomelic shortening of lower limbs, trident hand and hyperplastic vertebrae. The MRI revealed stenotic foramen magnum which was causing cervico-medullary kinking, short clivus, small foramen magnum and relative straight course of straight sinus.

Keywords: Achondroplasia, trident hand, rhizomelic shortening.

I. Introduction

Achondroplasia is the most common cause of congenital dwarfism. It is autosomal dominant disturbance in epiphyseal chondroblastic growth and maturation (1). Patients are of normal intelligence. Usually they have normal motor function. However a few present with mild to severe motor symptoms ranging from gait disturbances to quadripareisis to quadriplegia (2). As skull base forms by enchondral ossification, its growth can be affected with increasing age, leading to stenosis of the foramen magnum, that can cause compression over medulla/cervical cord. Compression of medulla may result in quadripareisis, sleep apnoea, and even sudden death. Interruption to normal CSF flow can produce hydrocephalus. MRI brain is usually not performed in patients with Achondroplasia and patient may present to us in later stages with dire symptoms. So one has to be wary of consequences that can be caused by stenosis of foramen magnum which can be avoided by in time MR imaging of brain and craniovertebral junction. We present a case of 12 month old girl child who presented to the pediatric OPD with chief complaints of difficulty in walking. The patient was subjected to clinical examination & conventional radiological investigations which revealed rhizomelic shortening of lower limbs, trident hand and hyperplastic vertebrae. The MRI revealed stenotic foramen magnum, which was causing cervico-medullary kinking, short clivus, small foramen magnum and relative straight course of straight sinus.

II. Case Report

Clinical History and Examination

A 9 month girl came with chief complaints of difficulty in walking and enlarged head. Examination & history revealed Rhizomelic dwarfism apparent at birth, Frontal bossing and depressed nasal bridge and Prominent Buttocks-Lumbar Lordosis. Provisional diagnosis of achondroplasia was made and patient was subjected to radiological evaluation.

Imaging Findings

Conventional Radiography

- Hand AP skiagram revealed Trident hand(- the 1st, 2nd, 3rd & 4th) fingers being almost equal in length & the hand is short with stubby fingers, with a separation between the middle and ring fingers (1,2,3).
- Dorso lumbar spine skiagram revealed bullet shaped hypoplastic vertebrae.
- Lower limb skiagram: Short femur-rhizomelic shortening, metaphyseal flaring, V shaped growth plates (chevron sign), long & bowed fibula (4).

MRI Brain

Multipplanar MR images of the brain were obtained using T1W, T2W & FLAIR sequences in Axial, Sagittal, coronal and diffusion images. T1, T2 & FLAIR Weighted Sagittal Images Show:

DOI: 10.9790/0853-15188386 www.iosrjournals.org 83 | Page
1. Cranial Vault

A large cranial vault with relatively short skull base with prominent forehead, depressed nasal bridge Narrowing of the foramen magnum with cervicomedullary kinking. AP cranio-cervical diameter is 10mm (normal 30-43mm). Short Clivus.

2. Cisternal Spaces

Suprasellar cistern is enlarged and cisterna magna is small. Bilateral lateral, 3rd & 4th ventricles appear mildly enlarged.

3. Brain Findings

- Hyper intensities are seen around lateral ventricles on FLAIR and T2W images due to trans ependymal seepage of CSF due to spinal canal stenosis at the level of foramen magnum.
- The straight sinus shows a more vertical course with tentorial angle of approximately 78.2 degrees (normally it should measure between 27 and 52 degrees.) Elevation of brain stem.
- Cavum velum interpositum is seen.

III. Conclusion

Achondroplasia is usually easily diagnosed on conventional radiology via radiographs of the skull, limbs and spine however usually brain MR imaging is not done, thereby missing the narrowed foramen magnum and its compression over cervico-medullary region which can present later with sever motor, respiratory complications. Timely investigation can help early diagnosis of compression over medulla/cervical cords and basilar invagination and thereby a timely surgical decompression can be done, with resection of the posterior aspect of the foramen magnum, the posterior arch of C1 and duroplasty.

Bibliography

[1]. Yochum and Rowe’s essentials of skeletal radiology; third edition; Terry R. Yochum, Lindsay J. Rowe; Lippincott Williams & Wilkins; Chapter 8: Skeletal Dysplasias (Pg 722).

Figures
Figure 1: T1 weighted mid sagittal image shows large cranial vault with relatively short skull base with prominent forehead and a depressed nasal bridge (red arrow). Enlarged suprasellar cistern (green arrow) & small cisterna magna (pink arrow).

Figure 2: T2 FLAIR image shows narrowing of the foramen magnum with cervicomedullary kinking (red arrow) and a short clivus (green arrow).

Figure 3: Axial T2 weighted images show enlarges lateral (red arrow) and 3rd ventricle (green arrow) and Cavum velum interpositum (purple arrow).
Figure 4: T2 weighted image show a relative vertical course of straight sinus with tentorial angle (78.2 degrees approx) (red arrow) with elevation of brain stem & small cisterna magna (green arrow).