Brainstem compression by “kissing vertebral arteries”

Figure Axial and coronal T2-weighted MRI showing brainstem compression from bilateral ectatic vertebral arteries

We report a case of brainstem compression from bilateral and enlarged vertebral arteries (VA) in a 55-year-old man with pyramidal tract signs and lower cranial nerve palsy typically seen in this disease process.

Our patient developed dysarthria, dysphagia, and unsteady gait over the previous 2 years. MRI and angiography showed brainstem compression by the VA (figure).

Vascular decompression was performed with the creation of a Gore-tex sling around the VA and subsequent improvement in our patient's symptoms.

Bilateral brainstem compression by “kissing vertebral arteries” is extremely rare.¹ Brainstem decompression can be achieved with transposition of the VA.²

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