The forgotten nails

Hemionychophagia

Figure Hemionychophagia due to neglect in a stroke patient

(A) MRI: left, coronal FLAIR-weighted image; right, axial T2-weighted image. Ischemic lesions affecting left caudate nucleus and insular subcortical white matter are seen (arrows). (B) Photographs taken 6 months after stroke.

A 34-year-old woman presented with a left middle cerebral artery stroke due to an ipsilateral internal carotid artery dissection. At discharge, neurologic exploration was normal. Performance at the line crossing and letter cancellation tests was flawless. MRI is shown in the figure, A. However, 6 months later, asymmetric self nail-biting was noticed (figure, B, arrows) without additional clinical or MRI findings, persisting at follow-up. This neurologic disturbance was considered as right-sided personal neglect and seems to be related to a functional disconnection between the thalamus and regions coding more abstract egocentric representations of the body in space.¹

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