Teaching NeuroImages: Benediction sign as a result of cervical astrocytoma with syringomyelia

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Figure Benediction sign

Benediction sign is a wrist position where the 3 raised fingers are allegorically interpreted in Christianity as representing the 3 Persons of the Holy Trinity (A). The left little and ring fingers do not extend (B). Note the trophic changes of the skin (C). Sagittal cervical (D) and thoracic (E) MRI show intramedullary tumor at C5–C6 with numerous cysts, and syringomyelia extending to the thoracic segment.

A 16-year-old boy developed progressive painless flexion contractures of the fourth and fifth left fingers. No amyotrophy was noted. The electroneuromyogram was unremarkable. Local steroid injections brought minimal improvement. Four years later, there was progression with similar symptoms in the right hand and involvement of the left third finger, trophic skin changes, atrophy of the interosseus muscles and thenar and hypothenar eminences, hyperreflexia, and sensory loss in the left hand (C8 territory). MRI demonstrated intramedullary tumor at C5–C6 with syringomyelia (figure). Histologic examination revealed a pilocytic astrocytoma. “Benediction sign” refers to the gesture conferring a blessing which occurs in ulnar paralysis¹ and syringomyelia.²

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Dr. Velizarova: drafting/revising the manuscript, study concept or design, analysis or interpretation of data, acquisition of data. Dr. Crespel: drafting/revising the manuscript, study concept or design, analysis or interpretation of data, study supervision. Dr. Morales: drafting/revising the manuscript, acquisition of data. Dr. Coubes: drafting/revising the manuscript, study concept or design, analysis or interpretation of data, neurosurgery. Dr. Gélisse: drafting/revising the manuscript, study concept or design, analysis or interpretation of data, contribution of vital reagents/tools/patients, acquisition of data.

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