Teaching NeuroImages: Facial ulceration in stroke

An unusual and lesser-known complication described by Wallenberg

Liau MeiQi May, MRCP, Tan Natalie Soong Hui, Tan Lixian Chris, MBBS, Joy Vijayan, MD, and Nisha Suyien Chandran, MRCP

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Correspondence

Dr. Vijayan
joy_vijayan@nuhs.edu.sg

Figure Left facial ulceration and MRI brain demonstrate the lateral medullary infarct

A 50-year-old woman with a history of lateral medullary stroke 3 years ago presented with a 7-month history of persistent itch with constant picking and a nonhealing ulcer on the left side of her face (figure). Examination revealed anesthesia over the V2 distribution of the trigeminal nerve. Trigeminal trophic syndrome is a rare cause of chronic facial ulceration first described by Wallenberg.¹ It results from damage to the trigeminal ganglion or nerve. Causes include trigeminal nerve ablation, stroke, tumors, herpes, and leprosy.² The ulceration results from self-mutilation due to facial anesthesia and paresthesias.

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From the Divisions of Dermatology (L.M.M., T.L.C., N.S.C.) and Neurology (J.V.), University Medicine Cluster, National University Hospital, Singapore; and Barts and the London School of Medicine and Dentistry (T.N.S.H.), UK.

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Author contributions

L.M.M., T.N.S.H., T.L.C., and N.S.C. performed the initial assessment and investigations of the patient. L.M.M., T.L.C., J.V., and N.S.C. helped in the compilation of the text, literature search, and editing of the manuscript.

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