Teaching Video NeuroImages: Pathologic yawning
A sign of brainstem involvement in acute disseminated encephalomyelitis?

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Figure Brain MRI

A 15-year-old boy had acute-onset encephalopathy following a viral prodrome, associated with frequent, dramatic yawning without EEG change (video). There were no focal deficits on examination. CSF protein elevation (1.72 g/L) without pleocytosis, brain MRI (figure), and significant improvement following methylprednisolone were consistent with acute disseminated encephalomyelitis (ADEM). Pathologic yawning is described in other demyelinating diseases, neuromyelitis optica spectrum disorder and multiple sclerosis, but is rarely reported with ADEM. Although prior reports postulated that brainstem and hypothalamic lesions are responsible,1 yawning is a complex reflex mediated by both supratentorial and infratentorial structures; its precise localization is not yet defined.2

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References
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