Teaching NeuroImages: High-resolution MRI before and during a sentinel headache demonstrates aneurysm wall hemorrhage

Radhia Ait Chalal, MD, Myriam Edjlali, PhD, Wagih Ben Hassen, MD, Catherine Lamy, MD, Gregoire Boulouis, MD, Christine Rodriguez Regent, MD, Denis Trystram, MD, Jean-Francois Meder, PhD, Catherine Oppenheim, PhD, and Olivier Naggara, PhD


A 3T brain MRI, performed in a 48-year-old woman presenting with progressive headaches, demonstrated a 20-mm unruptured saccular basilar artery aneurysm. High-resolution vessel-wall MRI showed a chronic mural thrombus and a circumferential aneurysm wall enhancement (figure), an imaging marker of aneurysm instability.1 Two days later, she had

**Figure** High-resolution vessel wall MRI before and during sentinel headache

(A) Giant basilar tip aneurysm on magnetic resonance angiography. Comparison between high-resolution vessel-wall imaging performed before (B, C) and during sentinel headache (D, E) demonstrates aneurysm wall mural hematoma modification with T1-crescentic hyperintensity and contrast uptake (arrows) and thickened circumferential aneurysm wall enhancement. Digital subtracted angiography, lateral view, is shown before (F) and after (G) aneurysm coiling.


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a transient thunderclap headache, considered the worst headache she had ever reported. Repeated 3T MRI demonstrated acute mural hemorrhage without subarachnoid hemorrhage. Sentinel headaches, reported in every fourth patient preceding aneurysm rupture, have been interpreted as reflecting a warning for subarachnoid leak or, alternatively, structural wall changes, such as stretching or acute mural hemorrhage.

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### Appendix

#### Authors

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Contribution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Radhia Ait Chalal, MD</td>
<td>Department of Neuroradiology, Centre Hospitalier Sainte-Anne, GHU Paris</td>
<td>Analysis and interpretation of data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Psychiatry &amp; Neurosciences, Paris University, INSERM UMR 1266, Paris, France</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Myriam Edjlali, PhD</td>
<td>Department of Neuroradiology, Centre Hospitalier Sainte-Anne, GHU Paris</td>
<td>Critical revision of manuscript for intellectual content, analysis and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Psychiatry &amp; Neurosciences, Paris University, INSERM UMR 1266, Paris, France</td>
<td>interpretation of data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wagih Ben Hassen, MD</td>
<td>Department of Neuroradiology, Centre Hospitalier Sainte-Anne, GHU Paris</td>
<td>Critical revision of manuscript for intellectual content, analysis and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Psychiatry &amp; Neurosciences, Paris University, INSERM UMR 1266, Paris, France</td>
<td>interpretation of data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catherine Lamy, MD</td>
<td>Department of Neurology, Centre Hospitalier Sainte-Anne, GHU Paris Psychiatry &amp; Neurosciences, Paris University, INSERM UMR 1266, Paris, France</td>
<td>Analysis and interpretation of data</td>
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### References

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