Teaching Video NeuroImage: Spasmus Nutans, an Infantile Nystagmus

Author(s):
Tommaso Bellini, MD; Marta Ferretti, MD; Stefania Santaniello, MD; Federico Pezzotta, MD; Emanuela Piccotti, MD; Pasquale Striano, MD, PhD

Corresponding Author:
Tommaso Bellini, tommasobellini@gaslini.org

Affiliation Information for All Authors: 1. Pediatric Emergency Room and Emergency Medicine, Gaslini Children Hospital, Istituto Giannina Gaslini, IRCCS, Genoa, Italy; 2. Department of Neurosciences, Rehabilitation, Ophthalmology, Genetics, Maternal and Child Health, University of Genoa, Italy; 3. Pediatric Neurology and Muscular Disease Unit, Gaslini Children Hospital, Istituto Giannina Gaslini, IRCCS, Genoa, Italy

Equal Author Contribution:

Neurology® Published Ahead of Print articles have been peer reviewed and accepted for publication. This manuscript will be published in its final form after copyediting, page composition, and review of proofs. Errors that could affect the content may be corrected during these processes. Videos, if applicable, will be available when the article is published in its final form.

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Contributions:
Tommaso Bellini: Drafting/revision of the manuscript for content, including medical writing for content; Study concept or design
Marta Ferretti: Drafting/revision of the manuscript for content, including medical writing for content
Stefania Santaniello: Major role in the acquisition of data
Federico Pezzotta: Major role in the acquisition of data
Emanuela Piccotti: Analysis or interpretation of data
Pasquale Striano: Drafting/revision of the manuscript for content, including medical writing for content; Study concept or design; Analysis or interpretation of data

Figure Count:
1

Table Count:
0

Search Terms:

Acknowledgment:

Study Funding:
The authors report no targeted funding
A 5-month-old boy came to emergency department due to a monocular nystagmus with head-nodding (HN) and torticollis (Video 1). Fundoscopic exam excluded macular/optic nerve hypoplasia and retinal abnormalities. Brain magnetic resonance (MRI) was unremarkable (Figure). A diagnosis of spasmus nutans (SN) was made.

SN is a monocular/bilateral horizontal nystagmus with HN and torticollis (1); it usually disappears within 2 years but can persist until 12 years with an increased risk of developmental delay.

Ophthalmological evaluation and MRI are mandatory to confirm the diagnosis and to distinguish SN from SN-like diseases with underlying retinal, optic chiasm or brain lesions (2).

Video 1 Legend

Video shows a high frequency, small amplitude, intermittent, horizontal right nystagmus (part 1) accompanied by HN (part 2) that is thought to be compensatory and may evoke the vestibular ocular reflex that may dampen the SN; at sixth second the patient presents brief binocular nystagmus before its resolution.

Figure Legend

Brain Magnetic Resonance. A. T2 sequence axial plane shows no lesions in optic nerves (red arrows) and a right parietal positional plagiocephaly related to torticollis. B. T2 sequence axial plane shows no lesions in optic chiasm. C. T2 sequence coronal plane at the blue line.

References.

