

Vertebrobasilar Insufficiency

What Is it?

-A hemodynamic posterior circulation transient ischemic attack (TIA) caused by intermittent vertebral artery occlusion that is induced by a head rotation or extension.

Signs and Symptoms

- 3 Ns and 5 Ds
- Nausea
- Nystagmus- involuntary eye movement
- Numbness
- Dizziness
- Dysphagia-difficulty with swallowing
- Diplopia- double vision
- Disarthria- difficulty with talking
- Drop Attacks- sudden loss of posture

Examination

- Vertebral Artery Testing
- The patient's head is taken into extension and held for 30 seconds
- The patient's head is then taken back to neutral, looking for any latent signs
- Look for any dizziness, dysphagia, dysarthria, drop attacks, diplopia or nystagmus
- The patient's neck is once again taken into extension and rotated to the right.
- This position is sustained for 30 seconds and look for any signs
- Take the neck back into the neutral position and look for any latent signs
- The same is done but this time the head is rotated to the left, looking for any associated signs
- Take the neck back into the neutral position and look for any latent signs

Medical Management

- LIFE THREATENING
- Need to call EMS
- Computed tomography (CT) scan or magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) to look at the vessels at the back of the brain
- Blood tests to evaluate clotting ability
- Echocardiogram
- X-ray of the arteries (angiogram)

PT Implications

- Comprehensive Pre-Screening before any cervical manipulations
- Watch for any red flags or signs and symptoms.

Causes

- VBI may result from large vessel atherosclerotic disease, dissection, cervical compressive lesions, and subclavian steal phenomenon.
- VBI occurs when the flow of blood to the back of the brain is reduced or stopped.
- In patients who develop VBI, atherosclerosis is the most common cause of the disorder

Risk Factors

- Smoking
- High blood pressure (hypertension)
- Diabetes
- Being over the age of 50
- Family history of the disease
- Elevated lipids (fats) in the blood (hyperlipidemia)



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