Acute Flaccid Myelitis

Enteroviruses belong to a common family of illnesses that include cold symptoms and rashes as well as polio. Recently, there has been a sharp increase in the number of enterovirus D68 cases and with it, an increasing number of clusters of children sick with breathing problems leading to paralysis associated with the malady known as acute flaccid myelitis.

According to the CDC, the median age of the children impacted by acute flaccid myelitis is about seven, and most patients had a fever and or respiratory illness before the neurological symptoms began. The paralysis that sometimes develops is different from transverse myelitis because TM usually affects upper motor neurons, resulting in muscle tightness rather than the flaccidity that results from damage to lower motor neurons.

The symptoms begin as a cold and develop into a respiratory infection. It can then develop into a flaccid muscle paralysis with polio-like symptoms. Researchers and doctors have not yet been able to make a definite connection between this enterovirus and the polio-like symptoms that sometimes follow the respiratory infection.

While two thirds of the patients with acute flaccid myelitis have had some improvement in symptoms, one third has not yet improved; one patient has fully recovered.

Websites

https://myelitis.org/living-with-myelitis/disease-information/#afm
Transverse Myelitis Association: Acute Flaccid Myelitis

American Academy of Pediatrics News: CDC releases guidance on acute flaccid myelitis 11/12/14

http://www.cdc.gov/acute-flaccid-myelitis/afm-surveillance.html
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Acute Flaccid Myelitis

Articles

http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/health-science/mystery-paralysis-in-children-is-perplexing-parents--and-researchers/2015/03/02/20e1113a-b69d-11e4-aa05-1ce812b3fdd2_story.html
Since September 2014, CDC and partners have been investigating reports of children across the United States who developed a sudden onset of weakness in one or more arms or legs with MRI scans that showed inflammation of the gray matter—nerve cells—in the spinal cord.

First seen in California, and then in Colorado, cases of acute flaccid myelitis marked by strikingly consistent MRI evidence of gray matter damage in the spinal cord are now believed to be affecting children in multiple states across the United States, according to neurologists tracking the outbreak. The reports have provoked grave concern among some specialists that the syndrome could affect even more patients next year.

New interim guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) suggest that no targeted therapies or interventions have “definitive efficacy” in the treatment or management of acute flaccid myelitis. The CDC has fielded numerous requests on how to manage and treat children with this illness. Because there is no clear evidence that therapies intended to modify the immune system (e.g., corticosteroids, immune globulin, plasmapheresis), clinicians are instead advised to use basic standards of care for children with severe neurologic disease, along with physical and occupational therapy.

Washington Post 9/21/16: A Mysterious Polio-Like Illness That Paralyzes People May be Surging this Year
Webinars/Podcasts

https://myelitis.org/acute-flaccid-myelitis-understanding-recent-outbreak/

Transverse Myelitis Association. “Acute Flaccid Myelitis: Understanding the Recent Outbreak – Q&A with Dr. Benjamin Greenberg and Dr. Teri Schreiner.” [Undated]

With the recent increase in reports of children being hospitalized due to a respiratory virus, enterovirus D68, there have been many reported cases of acute myelitis from across many states in the U.S. Dr. Benjamin Greenberg (University of Texas Southwestern and Dr. Teri Schreiner (Children’s Hospital, Colorado) share their experiences.

Medical Disclaimer

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