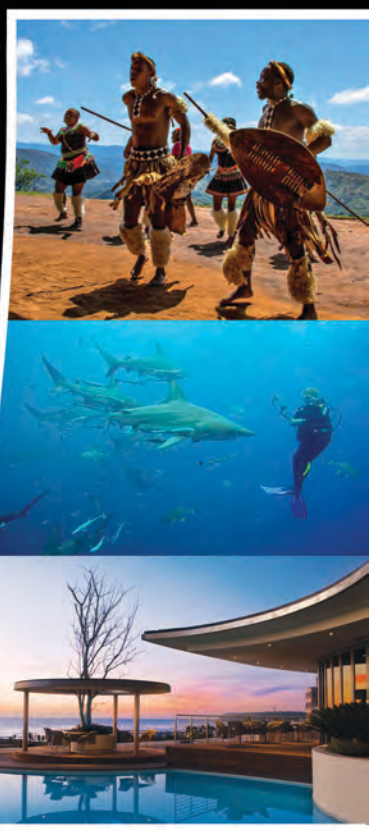
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D-19 INNER EAR DECOMPRESSION SICKNESS OR SINUS MUCOCELE: CASE REPORT

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Introduction

The diagnosis of decompression sickness (DCS) relies primarily on dive history and physical examination. However, symptoms and clinical findings may be misleading as they are not specific to diving diseases. We present a patient who was treated as DCS but later diagnosed as having a sinus mucocele.

Case report

A 59-year-old male patient was referred to a local emergency department with diplopia, nausea, vomiting, tinnitus and bilateral hearing loss after diving. He had undertaken two dives to 25 metres, each with 40 minutes bottom time and prolonged decompression stops. Intravenous rehydration and normobaric oxygen therapy were started. The patient had a history of Type 2 diabetes and hypertension. One year previously he had been treated for neurological DCS after which minimal hearing loss had persisted. When he was admitted to our department he had diplopia, bilateral horizontal nystagmus, an unsteady gait, ataxia and left sided dysdiadokokinesia. HBO therapy was started immediately. Echocardiography and thorax CT scanning were performed for “unexpected” DCI, but did not reveal any pathology. Nystagmus and ataxia persisted after HBO treatment. Electronystagmography showed weakness in caloric test and bilateral vestibular hypofunction. A sphenoid sinus lesion which eroded the temporal bone was seen in cranial MRI. With CT it was shown to be in the mid brain cavity adjacent to the optical nerve and cavernous sinus. He was diagnosed with a sphenoid sinus mucocele and this was surgically removed. After surgery he recovered completely.

Discussion/Conclusion

Mucocele is a cystic mass that is filled with mucus. Sphenoid mucocele, a very rare form, may expand and compress optic nerve and cavernous sinus which carries cranial nerves 3, 4 and 6. Therefore it may cause visual disturbances that would present as nystagmus and gait problems. These symptoms may easily be confused with DCS when they occur after diving.

Keywords

Decompression sickness, Case report, Misdiagnosis, Sinus mucocele