SECONDARY HYPERALDOSTERONISM AND HYPERTENSION

AUTHORS

Miloš Mijalković, Slavica Pajović, Aleksandar Jovanović, Maja Šipić
1 Cardio Medica Polyclinic, Niš
2 University of Priština, Faculty of Medicine, Kosovska Mitrovica

SUMMARY

Introduction: Arterial hypertension is a major cardiovascular risk factor affecting about 10-40% of the adult population. Secondary endocrine hypertension most often results from excessive aldosterone secretion. Complications related to excessive aldosterone secretion include atrial fibrillation, myocardial infarction, myocardial fibrosis, left ventricular hypertrophy, stroke, and increased cardiovascular mortality.

Case report: This report presents a hypotensive woman with hypertensive reactions, newly diagnosed unilateral hyperplasia of the left adrenal gland and secondary hyperaldosteronism. Due to good blood pressure and normalized electrolyte status as a result of antihypertensive drug therapy and absence of damage to target organs, surgical treatment of unilateral adrenal hyperplasia was postponed.

Conclusion: In case of midlife and late-life hypertension, it is necessary to consider a cause in the patient's endocrine system.

Key words: hyperaldosteronism, unilateral adrenal hyperplasia, hypertension

SEKUNDARNI HIPERALDOSTERONIZAM I HIPERTENZIJA

Miloš Mijalković, Slavica Pajović, Aleksandar Jovanović, Maja Šipić
1 Poliklinika Kardiomedica, Niš
2 Univerzitet u Prištini, Medicinski fakultet, Kosovska Mitrovica

SAŽETAK

Uvod: Arterijska hipertenzija je glavni faktor kardiovaskularnog rizika koji pogada oko 10-40% odraslog stanovništva. Sekundarna endokrina hipertenzija najčešće nastaje usled prekomerne sekrecije aldosterona. Komplikacije prekomerne ekscrecije aldosterona su atrijalna fibrilacija, infarkt miokarda, miokardna fibroza, hipertrofija leve komore, moždani udar.

Prikaz slučaja: U radu je prikazana hipotenzivna pacijentkinja sa hipertenzivnim reakcijama, novootkrivenom unilateralnom hiperplazijom leve nadbubrežne žlezde i sekundarnim hiperaldosteronizmom. Zbog dobre kontrole krvnog pritiska i optimalnog elektrolitskog statusa, odustavljena je operativna lečenja unilateralne adrenalne hiperplazije.

Zaključak: U cilju postavljanja pravilne dijagnoze i terapije hipertenzije, važno je pitateća ispitivanje postojanja uzroka u endokrinom sistemu pacijenta.

Ključne reči: hiperaldosteronizam, unilateralna adrenalna hiperplazija, hipertenzija.
INTRODUCTION

Arterial hypertension is a major cardiovascular risk factor affecting about 10-40% of the adult population, and is slightly more common in men than women. Secondary hypertension is a disease with a known cause and occurs in about 5% of cases. In endocrine hypertension, one of the most common causes is primary hyperaldosteronism (1,2).

Primary hyperaldosteronism was first described by Jerome W. Conn in 1954. Its main characteristics include autonomous aldosterone production from the glomerular zone of the adrenal cortex and secondary renin activity suppression with the development of hypertension and hypokalemic alkalosis (3). Pathophysiologically increased reabsorption of sodium and circulating fluid volume leads to increased peripheral vascular resistance and development of hypertension. Apart from adrenal cortex tumors, the most common causes are bilateral adrenal hyperplasia, followed by unilateral adrenal hyperplasia, ectopic aldosterone-producing tumor, aldosterone-producing adrenocortical carcinoma and familial hyperaldosteronism type I (4).

Secondary hyperaldosteronism occurs due to renal hypoperfusion and consequent over-activation of the renin-angiotensin-aldosterone system, and is characterized by increased aldosterone levels, increased renin, hypokalemia, hypernatremia, or normal sodium levels. Transient activation of the renin-angiotensin-aldosterone system may occur physiologically due to hypovolemia. It also occurs with renal artery stenosis (atherosclerosis or fibromuscular dysplasia), renal vasoconstriction, left-sided congestive heart failure, pregnancy, chronic pulmonary heart disease, liver cirrhosis and ascites, and less frequently with renin-secreting renal tumor. Secondary hyperaldosteronism is diagnosed less frequently than primary, and both primary and secondary hyperaldosteronism are more common in women, between ages 30 and 60 (5,6).

CASE REPORT

A 62-year-old patient reported for cardiologist examination due to frequent blood pressure spikes of up to 185/120 mmHg. Hypertensive reactions were accompanied by nausea, numbness of the lips and part of the face, tremors and tachycardia. This was a hypertensive woman in whom elevated blood pressure values had first been measured around the age of 25, after pregnancy. At that time, she was not examined for secondary hypertension. She reported a positive family history (father and mother were treated for hypertension in their youth).

However, abdomen MSCT showed up to 8 mm hyperplasia of the left adrenal gland medial section, dominated by fat content (Figure 1).
Complete diagnostic procedure determined it was unilateral adrenal hyperplasia of the left adrenal gland with suspected secondary hyperaldosteronism. At endocrine surgeon examination, surgical treatment of the adrenal gland was not indicated, and monitoring (MSCT or MR of the abdomen) and drug therapy were suggested.

The patient’s therapy comprising Spirinolactone 1x25 mg, Lisinopril 1x10mg, Concor 1x5 mg and saltier diet shows satisfactory blood pressure regulation and electrolyte status normalization. Introduced therapy has normalized blood pressure and improved the subjective feeling of the patient. Hypertensive crises have not been registered in the further course of treatment.

DISCUSSION

Excessive aldosterone secretion is the most common cause of secondary endocrine hypertension. According to some recent studies, it is a much more common cause of hypertension than previously thought, with a prevalence of 10% in the general hypertensive population, and occurs in about 20% of patients with resistant hypertension (7). Complete diagnostic processing should be carried out in case of stage II and III hypertension, hypertension that does not respond well to medical treatment, hypertension with spontaneous hypokalemia or diuretic-induced hypokalemia, hypertension with adrenal incidentaloma, hypertension and family history of early-onset hypertension (8).

Complications of excessive aldosterone secretion include atrial fibrillation, myocardial infarction, myocardial fibrosis, left ventricular hypertrophy, stroke, as well as increased cardiovascular mortality (9,10). Patients with hyperaldosteronism and secondary hypertension have higher cardiovascular morbidity and mortality as compared to patients with essential hypertension of the same stage, sex and age. Also, long-term exposure to elevated aldosterone levels can result in significant cardiovascular damage, regardless of the blood pressure level. These results have prompted further, significant research in this field aimed at finding specific therapeutic options (11,12).

Treatment with mineralocorticoid receptor inhibitors, i.e. spirinolactone, is the first-line therapy. Eplerenone is considered in spironolactone intolerance, gynecomastia in men and menstrual disorders in women (13). Spironolactone and eplerenone-intolerant patients are administered amiloride and triamterene. Calcium antagonists, ACE inhibitors or angiotensin II receptor antagonists as well as doxazosin can be combined with mineralocorticoid receptor inhibitors to better regulate blood pressure (14,15,16).

When administration of several antihypertensive drugs shows no results in controlling blood pressure and hypokalemia, surgical treatment is indicated. In unilateral adrenal hyperplasia, unilateral adrenalectomy, preferably laparoscopically, is the method of choice with a very high success rate in controlling blood pressure and potassium values postoperatively (17).

CONCLUSION

This paper aims to indicate that the examination for secondary endocrine hypertension should be carried out in mid-life age as well, especially if there are atypical anamnestic data about sudden blood pressure spikes. If tension is normalized with medications, and there is no damage to other target organs, then adrenal hyperplasia surgical treatment, which is the most common type of treatment, is postponed until further notice.

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