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### Published In/Presented At

Palilonis, M. M., & Jacoby, J. L. (2018). A non-traumatic, rapid-onset headache that is as dangerous as subarachnoid hemorrhage (SAH) seen in the emergency department. *The American Journal Of Emergency Medicine*, 36(9), 1720.e3. doi:10.1016/j.ajem.2018.05.071

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## Case Report

# A non-traumatic, rapid-onset headache that is as dangerous as subarachnoid hemorrhage (SAH) seen in the emergency department

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## ARTICLE INFO

## Article history:

Received 24 May 2018

Accepted 29 May 2018

## ABSTRACT

A 36yo male with multiple non-traumatic, rapid-onset headaches had Emergency Department visits on days 3 and 10 after onset of symptoms. He is a social smoker and drinker. CT head imaging was negative. An MRI/MRA was obtained. The image represents multiple foci of vasoconstriction and dilation in medium and large cerebral vessels consistent with Reversible Cerebral Vasoconstriction Syndrome (RCVS). Multiple rapid-onset headaches and "string of beads" on MRA imaging are pathognomonic for RCVS, which has a 4:1 female to male ratio. Manifestations include the pure cephalic form, characterized by a headache; subarachnoid hemorrhage and cerebral infarction have also been reported. Vasoactive drugs and the post-partum period are recognized as common inciting events. Symptoms usually resolve in 3–6 months. Treatment with nimodipine, 1–2mg/kg/hr IV and/or 30–60mg PO QID orally over 4–8 weeks, has been reported to be effective.

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A 36 yo male with multiple non-traumatic, rapid-onset headaches who had Emergency Department visits on days 3 and 10 after onset of symptoms. He is a social smoker and drinker. CT head imaging was negative on initial ED visit. An MRI/MRA was obtained on second ED visit. The image represents multiple foci of vasoconstriction and dilation in medium and large cerebral vessels consistent with Reversible Cerebral Vasoconstriction Syndrome (RCVS). Multiple rapid-onset headaches and "string of beads" (Fig. 1) on MRA imaging are pathognomonic for RCVS, which has a 4:1 female to male ratio. Manifestations include the pure cephalic form, characterized by a headache; subarachnoid hemorrhage and cerebral infarction have also been reported. Vasoactive drugs and the post-partum period are recognized as common inciting events. Symptoms usually resolve in 3–6 months. Treatment with nimodipine, 1–2 mg/kg/h IV and/or 30–60 mg PO QID orally over 4–8 weeks, has been reported to be effective in many cases.

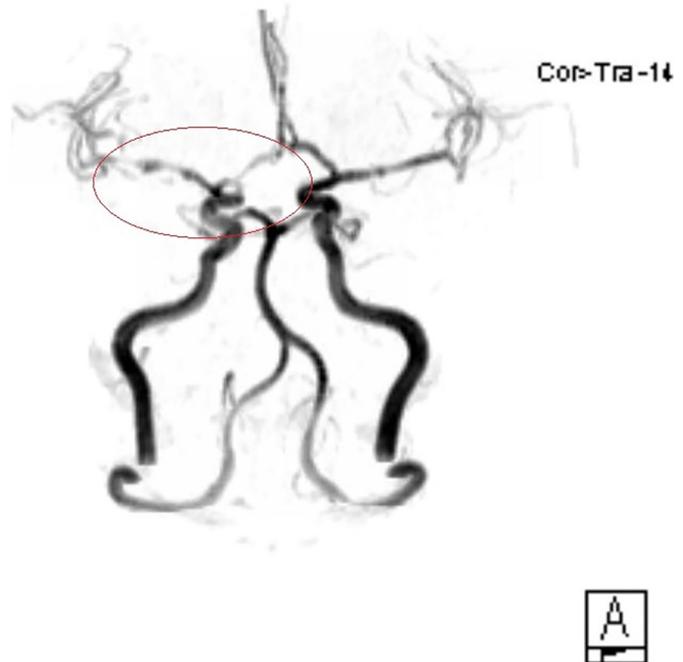


Fig. 1. "String of beads" of vasoconstricted and dilated segments seen along middle cerebral artery on MRA imaging in Reversible Cerebral Vasoconstriction Syndrome (RCVS).

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