Sjögren’s syndrome in an elderly woman presenting with gait disturbance: A case report

SHU KOITO*, MASATAKA KUDO*, YUMI INOUE*, HIROSHI IMURA*

* ASO IIZUKA HOSPITAL

Patients with Sjögren’s syndrome exhibit glandular symptoms such as keratoconjunctivitis sicca and xerostomia, and extraglandular symptoms such as neuropathy. Approximately 30% of the elderly complain of dry eye, dry mouth, and lower extremity pain. Presently, we discuss the case of a patient presenting with lower limb pain and gait disturbance which was originally misdiagnosed as spinal stenosis following MRI and later, identified as extraglandular symptoms of Sjögren’s syndrome.

An 84-year-old woman visited Iizuka Hospital presenting with an abnormal sensation in the dorsal and plantar foot which began several years ago and eventually, spread to the right lower thigh. Physical examination confirmed the abnormal sensation of the dorsal and plantar left foot, and right crus (L4-S1 area). Lumbar MRI confirmed spinal stenosis of L4-S1 vertebrae; however, the consulting orthopedic surgeon concluded the stenosis to be insignificant. Owing to suspicions of mononeuritis multiplex, autoantibody tests were conducted which revealed elevated anti-Sjörgen’s Syndrome-A / B antibodies. The patient experienced xerostomia and the gum test revealed a value of 6.5 mm whereas, a lip biopsy confirmed the infiltration of lymphocytotoxic antibody-positive lymphocytes, and the result of Schirmer test was 4.5 / 1.0 mm. Therefore she was diagnosed with Sjögren’s syndrome and symptomatically treated with pregabalin 20 mg / day and duloxetine hydrochloride 40 mg / day.

Neuropathy associated with Sjögren’s syndrome reportedly occurs in approximately 10% of the population. The neurological symptoms of Sjögren’s syndrome vary, although peripheral neuropathy is common. Owing to the long clinical course, our patient received symptomatic treatment; however, early diagnosis warrants steroid administration. Therefore, a primary care physician should include Sjögren’s syndrome among the differential diagnoses when encountered with symptoms of peripheral neuropathy in the elderly.