Transient Global Amnesia and Jugular Vein Incompetence

To the Editor:

In the January issue of Stroke, Cejas et al1 documented the frequency of jugular vein incompetence in patients with transient global amnesia, and Altamura and Vernier2 editorialized on the subject. Neither communication wrestles with the major dilemma in assigning a causal relationship to the venous phenomenon, namely “How can a very transient change in venous drainage from the cranium account for a disorder that invariably lasts hours?” Increased venous pressure, even when sustained as in patients with congestive heart failure and pericardial effusions, has not been recognized as causing transient global amnesia.

In previous communications3–6 I have shared my impression that transient global amnesia is most often caused by arterial vasoconstriction often precipitated by systemic changes—Valsalva maneuvers, emotional stress, heavy work, immersion in cold water, etc. Could the transient but often sudden change in venous flow trigger arterial vasoconstriction in susceptible individuals. Hypercholesterolemia and other atherosclerotic risk factors and aging make arteries more susceptible to vasoconstriction. Migraine, a disorder known to contain vasoconstriction, is an important cause of transient global amnesia.

Disclosures

None.

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