

The unusual development of Foreign Accent Syndrome following head and neck surgery – case reports and review of the literature

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INTRODUCTION

Foreign accent syndrome (FAS) is a rare condition in which the patient's pronunciation is perceived by native speakers as compromised by a foreign accent. This entity was first described in 1907, and was originally only associated with neurological damage. Research has found FAS to also be associated with, psychogenic and congenital illnesses.¹

The diagnostic criteria to assess psychogenic FAS² is:

- (1) The onset of an accent that is considered by the patient, acquaintances and the investigator, to sound foreign
- (2) there is no evidence in the patient's background to speak in a foreign language,
- (3) absence of neurological damage, and
- (4) the presence of, or indication(s) for psychological/psychiatric condition.

A recent systematic review reported 15 cases of psychogenic FAS, from which 4 of them were not associated with psychiatric disorders but with stressful situations.²

In this work, we report 3 cases of FAS with onset after oral cavity surgery.

Description of FAS after Head and Neck surgery has not yet been published in the literature.

CASES

British Accent	Caribbean Accent	Southern Accent
30 year old female Diagnosis: Tongue SCCa Underwent hemiglossectomy and right neck dissection, with a free flap reconstruction. After surgery she began speaking with a British accent, this was noted by the patient, family, medical providers and staff. Her accent persisted during radiation and in her subsequent follow-up appointments. However soon after completion of cancer treatment her accent self-resolved.	46 year old female Diagnosis: Floor of Mouth SCCa Underwent composite resection FOM, segmental mandibulectomy and neck dissection with fibula free flap reconstruction. During her adjuvant chemoradiation therapy, the patient developed a Caribbean accent, which was pointed out by her family, medical providers and staff. The accent disappeared soon after she completed her adjuvant therapy.	50 year old female Dx: Right alveolar SCCa. Underwent composite resection with segmental mandibulectomy and fibula reconstruction. During the course of her cancer treatment she developed a southern accent, and this was noted by her family and medical providers. Her accent resolved after cancer treatment completion. However, she had two remissions and the accent recurred during subsequent cancer treatment.

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CONCLUSIONS

- A Systematic review reported 60% of psychogenic FAS cases to be persistent.
- Cases are so rare that are sometimes presented in news articles.
- None of these patients had any underlying neurological or psychiatric conditions.
- FAS is a rare occurrence after oral cavity surgery that has not been otherwise documented in the literature.
- This case series highlight the possibility of development of FAS to be caused by the psychological stress and physical manipulation of the oral cavity.

REFERENCES

References:

- 1) Catanese, Charles. Traumatic brain injury: Methods for clinical and forensic neuropsychiatric assessment. CRC press, 2007.
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