

Unusual Presentation of Odontogenic Pain Misdiagnosed as Trigeminal Neuralgia

Parth Patel, M.D., Omar Dyara, D.O.
Medical College of Wisconsin - Milwaukee, WI

INTRO

- Trigeminal Neuralgia (TN) is a neuropathic disorder with recurrent pain along the distribution of the trigeminal nerve
- TN has no objective laboratory findings that confirm the diagnosis. Detailed history and exam is key.
- TN is mostly in the V2 and V3 distribution causing it to mimic odontogenic pain.
- It would be unusual to have a case of odontogenic pain misdiagnosed as TN given odontogenic pain usually has an identifiable dental cause such as caries.

PATIENT HISTORY AND COURSE

- 45-year-old female with history of migraines
- Suffered fall from a scooter causing left mandibular fracture
- Underwent uncomplicated ORIF of mandible
- Continued pain after procedure
- Interventions received after initial fixation
 - Extensive dental cleaning
 - Mandible hardware explant
 - Root canal
 - Botox injections
 - Oxcarbazepine trial
- Providers seen prior to pain management referral:
 - 2 Otolaryngologists
 - Neurology
 - Dentistry

A comprehensive history and exam prevents unnecessary procedures and referrals



Figure 1: CT Facial Bones displaying mildly displaced fracture of the left mandibular body

CASE RESOLUTION

- Ultimately referred to pain management for consideration of TN block, nearly 2 years after her initial mandible fixation
- Detailed history and timeline was created of all of her procedures and specialty visits.
- Became clear that her pain was improving until her root canal after which she had worsening pain
- Deferred TN block due to belief that this was odontogenic pain and block would not present long-term solutions
- Case discussed with dental colleague and patient received dedicated dental CT scan
- Extracted affected tooth with resolution of her symptoms.

DISCUSSION

- This case demonstrates importance of detailed history in diagnosis of pain syndromes.
- H&P especially important in situations where patients see a wide array of specialists and have undergone numerous procedures (some potentially unwarranted)
- Taking the time to extensively chart review and perform a history can prevent undue procedures for patients, reduce patient harm, and lead to faster resolution of patient symptoms

REFERENCES

- Khawaja SN, Scrivani SJ. Trigeminal Neuralgia. Dent Clin North Am. 2023 Jan;67(1):99-115. doi: 10.1016/j.cden.2022.07.008. Epub 2022 Oct 27. PMID: 36404084.