

A Case of Pneumocephalus with Atypical Symptoms Following Labor Epidural

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Background

Pneumocephalus is a rare but known complication of neuraxial anesthesia

- Incidence of inadvertent dural puncture estimated to be 1.5%

Symptoms include sudden-onset "thunderclap" headache, nausea, focal neurologic deficits

Gold standard for diagnosis: CT head

Treatment is largely symptomatic

- Bed rest, hydration, analgesics
- Oxygen therapy

Case

28 y/o G2P0010 with no significant past medical/obstetric history presenting at 32w0d for IOL after recent diagnosis of IUFD

Epidural placement complicated by inadvertent dural puncture.

Timeline



PDD 1

•Routine follow-up: mild positional headache improved with oral acetaminophen. Felt well enough for discharge



PDD 2

Key Points

- Management of postpartum headache includes a broad differential diagnosis and management should be based on underlying etiology
 - Atypical presentations can confound the clinical picture
- Air or saline? Would it have made a difference?
- New vs. redistribution of air?
- Communication is key
 - Patient safety, patient satisfaction, and provider understanding



References

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4. Chestnut 2014