

Old Age Psychiatry CBL 7-The patient with forgetfulness and a history of vascular risk factors

Learning Outcomes

- 1) To recognise the clinical features of vascular dementia
- 2) To recall the aetiology and risk factors for vascular dementia
- 3) To be aware of possible neuroimaging findings in vascular dementia
- 4) To understand the basic principles of management of vascular dementia

Case history

Mr D is a 75 year old widower with a history of hypertension, type 2 diabetes and hypercholesterolaemia. He had a myocardial infarction 5 years ago, treated with emergency bypass surgery and he recovered well. His blood pressure and lipids had previously been fairly well-controlled on medication, but this has deteriorated over recent years. His HbA1c has been high on recent tests at 71 mmol/mol and his GP suspects that his diet is deteriorating. His BP is currently 152/104. He is an ex-smoker, and smoked 20-30 cigarettes a day up until he had his MI, when he gave up.

Over the last 2 years, Mr D's son started to notice that he was forgetting to pay the bills. His memory and general ability to look after himself seemed to be gradually deteriorating, but on a couple of occasions he has seemed to suddenly get a lot worse without recovery. He can no longer go to the shops or make dinner for himself. Mr D's son has noticed changes in his dad's personality, he has become more verbally aggressive when things don't go his way and is often tearful with no clear trigger.

His son has reduced his work hours so that he can visit twice every day to help Mr D get up and get ready for bed. He does the shopping for his father and gets him mostly ready meals. He also pays a cleaner to come round once a week. Mr D's son is really feeling the strain and his GP is worried that he might be depressed himself.

Questions

- 1) What is the most likely cause of Mr D's cognitive problems? Why?
- 2) What is the differential diagnosis for the current presentation?
- 3) Mr D's doctor requests a brain scan. What might it show?
- 4) What are the risk factors for developing vascular dementia?
- 5) What are the main clinical features different types of vascular dementia? Which is most likely in this case given the history?
- 6) How can you help Mr D and his son? Think about different types of intervention and support including biological, psychological and social.
- 7) An MRI brain scan shows multiple cortical infarcts and extensive small vessel disease with moderate global cortical atrophy. Does this fit with the diagnosis? What vascular changes might you find if you were to scan a healthy population of this age?

Advanced Questions:

- 1) Do you think Mr D is depressed? Discuss vascular depression and the management.
- 2) What is the prognosis for vascular dementia?

Review article

John T O'Brien and Alan Thomas 2015. Vascular dementia. The Lancet, Volume 386, Issue 10004, Pages 1698-1706