



## **Intravenous Immunoglobulin in the Treatment of Patient with Acute Disseminated Encephalomyelitis: Case Report**

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### **Author's contribution**

*The sole author designed, analyzed and interpreted and prepared the manuscript.*

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**Case Report**

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### **ABSTRACT**

**Background:** Acute disseminated encephalomyelitis (ADEM) is a monophasic process nevertheless sometimes aggravated by relapses (so-called multiphase course of the disease). The treatment of ADEM must be targeted at reducing clinical manifestations of the disease and prevention of its relapses.

**Case Presentation:** We report a 42-year old woman with a diagnosis of acute disseminated encephalomyelitis. The patient received intravenous immunoglobulin in the dose of 0.4 g per 1 kg of body mass within 5 days 1 month after the hormonal pulse-therapy. The treatment was followed by monthly administration of human normal immunoglobulin – 0.4 g per 1 kg of body mass within 24 months as a method of ADEM monotherapy.

The positive dynamics of clinical symptoms was recorded 5 days after the beginning of the treatment (tendon anisoreflexia and swaying reduced). The treatment was followed by monthly administration of human normal immunoglobulin in the dose of 0.4 mg/kg. Three, nine and eighteen months after the beginning of the treatment the patient had two more MRI investigations of the brain that showed positive dynamics of the disease: reduction of demyelination foci and no

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accumulation of contrast agents. Her neurological deficits disappeared completely in 3 months. No relapses were observed over 24 months of observation.

**Conclusion:** This case report confirms a positive therapeutic efficacy of intravenous immunoglobulin in the treatment of patient with ADEM – reduction of clinical manifestations of the disease, in particular a decrease in neurological deficit level. Monthly intravenous immunoglobulin administration also helps to prevent the disease relapses (multiphase ADEM course).

*Keywords: Acute disseminated encephalomyelitis; treatment; intravenous immunoglobulin; case report.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Increasing the efficacy of the treatment of patients with acute disseminated encephalomyelitis (ADEM) remains an actual problem for clinical neurology. ADEM is an autoimmune disease characterized by presence of inflammation and demyelination foci, being caused by infectious disease or vaccination, in the central nervous system [1-6]. The following infections may be the triggering factors for ADEM: viral factors (measles, rubella, mumps, parainfluenza viruses [7-11], hepatitis A and B [7,12,13], whooping cough, tetanus [7,14,15], Epstein-Barr virus, cytomegalovirus and bacterial factors (Mycoplasma pneumoniae [7,16-20], Campylobacter [7,21-23], Borrelia Burgdogferi [7, 24,25], Leptospira, Chlamydia, Legionella, B - hemolytic streptococcus group A [7,26-28]. However, in most cases there is an evidence of a nonspecific upper respiratory tract infection and there is no serologic evidence of pathogen [7,24, 29,30]. Vaccines that may lead to ADEM development include vaccines against influenza, measles, hepatitis B, rabies, tetanus, chicken pox [7,26,31-34]. There are also cases of spontaneous development of the disease [7,35-37].

The criteria necessary for the diagnosis of acute disseminated encephalomyelitis are given in the book of Harris C, et al. [4]. In 2007, the International Pediatric Multiple Sclerosis Study Group defined ADEM as “the first clinical event with a poly-symptomatic encephalopathy, with an acute or subacute onset, showing focal or multifocal hyperintense lesions predominantly affecting the CNS white matter” [7,4]. This definition shows how difficult it may be to differentiate ADEM from a multiple sclerosis at an early stage [38]. Magnetic resonance imaging can help in differentiating ADEM from multiple sclerosis. In ADEM, lesions are typically extensive but poorly defined. They are mainly found in the white matter but can also extend to the deep gray matter. Multiple sclerosis lesions are commonly found in the periventricular white

matter and corpus callosum and are less likely to involve the gray matter [38].

According to the recent studies of International Pediatric Multiple Sclerosis Study Group (IPMS), ADEM is regarded as polysymptomatic disease with multifocal lesion of CNS. Encephalopathy and disorders of consciousness are part of the presentation [39]. Some authors consider ADEM as polysymptomatic demyelinating inflammatory disease which is characterized by an acute or subacute onset, no data about preceding lesion of CNS, significant improvement of patient's condition after the treatment [39,40]. Also ADEM is characterized by the signs of systemic inflammatory response (headache, dizziness, nausea, fever, myalgia), appearing a few days – weeks after the infectious disease (so-called latent period) [41,42].

In most cases, ADEM is characterized by the monophasic course accompanied by considerable variations in the duration of the disease and period of convalescence of the patient. However, there are possible relapses of ADEM that have already been known since 1932, as described by van Bogaert, who published the paper “ADEM with relapses” [36,43]. ADEM relapses can be considered as a multiphasic course of this disease or its transformation into multiple sclerosis (MS) (according to the McDonald Criteria) [43,44-50]. The relapse rate of ADEM has been described, ranging from 5.5% to 24% [43,51-58].

New clinical symptoms appearing three months after initial signs of this disease are considered as a relapse of ADEM. In case of the disease relapse, the pathological process comprises new parts of brain and/or spinal cord (which is usually confirmed by clinical investigations and neurovisual methods) [43].

If the relapse appears in a short time interval after initial signs and is combined with further infection or cancelled hormonal therapy, the term multiphasic disseminated encephalomyelitis

(MDEM) should be used [12,43,58]. In the researchers' opinion MDEM is characterized by poly-symptomatic manifestations of this disease, availability of demyelination nidi in Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) data, mainly in subcortical parts of brain, in less degree located periventricularly, with total or partial disappearance of foci during the convalescent period [43,59]. The multiphasic course of disseminated encephalomyelitis can be diagnosed in the case of disease relapse appearance at least 3 months after its initial presentation [12,36,43,57,59]. Appearance of new clinic symptoms and new foci in MRI data 12 to 18 months after the primary episode of the disease is indicative of its possible transformation into multiple sclerosis (MS) (according to the McDonald Criteria) [43,50,60]. Relapses of acute disseminated encephalomyelitis are called multiphase course of the disease [24,43]. Therefore treatment of acute disseminated encephalomyelitis must be aimed at reducing intensity of neurological impairment and prevention of the disease relapses.

There is a lack of controlled clinical trials and no proven standard treatment for ADEM. Most treatment options are based on empirical and observational evidence. Once ADEM is diagnosed and acute infectious etiology is excluded, treatment should be instituted as soon as possible [43,61,62].

There is also a lack of evidence-based, prospective clinical trial data for the management of ADEM [63]. As far as development of the disease is caused by autoimmune response, patients are recommended pathogenetic immunosuppressive therapy aimed at suppression of the immune response to infectious agent or vaccination with the high doses of corticosteroids [43,64-68]. Hormone therapy is also recommended due to its ability to block or modify the course of experimental allergic encephalomyelitis. In addition to its anti-inflammatory and immunosuppressive action, hormone therapy restores the function of blood-brain barrier, activates phagocytosis and immunoglobulin synthesis. Intravenous administration of corticosteroids over a period of several days followed by their peroral administration is considered to be the most common treatment scheme [43,63,69-74]. However, in some cases where the efficacy of pulse-therapy with corticosteroids is insufficient, intravenous administration of immunoglobulin is

used [43,75-84]. Plasmapheresis method is also used for the treatment of patients with the diagnosis of ADEM [43,63,84-89]. However, the effectiveness of these treatments (glucocorticoids, intravenous immune globulin, and plasma exchange) for ADEM has not been definitively confirmed, as there are no prospective clinical trial data to determine optimal treatment, including dose or duration.

## 2. CASE REPORT

A 42-year old female was being treated at the neurological department of the Kyiv City Clinical Hospital № 4 (Kyiv, Ukraine) after a 5-day history of numbness in the lower extremities. The patient denied visual changes, seizure, headache, mental status changes, bowel or bladder dysfunction, or speech or language difficulties. There was no history of toxin ingestion. There was a history of an upper respiratory tract illness ~1 week before her first symptom.

The patient's general physical examination was unremarkable. Her vital signs were stable, and she was afebrile. She was alert, oriented, and cooperative. MMSE (Mini - Mental State Examination) [90] was used to measure key constructs in cognitive psychology such as verbal learning and delayed recall, sustained attention and concentration as well as memory, attention and orientation in time and space assessment and showed 27 points (normal ranges are 28-30 points). Her speech was fluent. According to the neurological examination, the patient had weak convergence of eyeballs, asymmetry of face, tongue deviation to the right, positive subcortical reflexes, increase of deep reflexes with anisoreflexia (S>D), reduction of abdominal reflexes, patchy loss of vibration and temperature sensation in distal parts of lower extremities, swaying when performing the Romberg test.

MRI investigation showed the signs of disseminated demyelination process in the brain (multiple foci of hyperintensive signal on T2-weighted image without clear contours with the perifocal edema (up to 10-12 mm in diameter) were seen in the white and grey matter of the cerebral hemispheres in the frontal and parietal lobes subcortically).

Various laboratory tests were ordered (Table 1). These included routine blood tests, urinalysis, cerebrospinal fluid analysis, screening for autoimmune diseases. An ophthalmic exam also was performed. Cerebrospinal fluid examination

demonstrated 8 white blood cells with 100% lymphocytes. CSF culture for bacteria was negative. Polymerase chain reaction (PCR) analysis of CSF for herpes simplex virus (HSV) 1 and 2, and Epstein-Barr virus (EBV) were negative. Venereal Disease Research Laboratories tests (VDRL) of CSF as well as serum fluorescent treponemal antibodies were negative. Serologic studies for HIV, cytomegalovirus (CMV), toxoplasma, HSV, hepatitis A, B, C viruses, rubella, measles, EBV and leptospira were unremarkable. Anaerobic bacteria were not isolated. Oligoclonal IgG bands in cerebrospinal fluid were not detected. Screening for autoimmune diseases remained negative.

According to the indications the treatment of the patient was preceded by premedication with hormonal pulse-therapy, using methylprednisolone in the dose of 500 mg daily in 200 ml of isotonic sodium chloride solution (within 5 days). The patient was also daily administrated intravenous immunoglobulin in the dose of 0.4 g per 1 kg of mass of body within 5 days 1 month after the hormonal pulse-therapy. The treatment was followed by monthly administration of human normal immunoglobulin – 0.4 g per 1 kg of body mass within 24 months as a method of ADEM monotherapy.

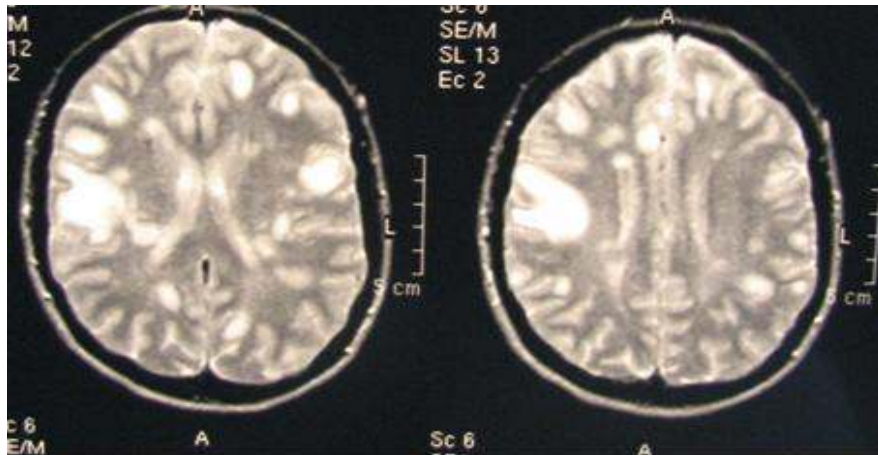
The positive dynamics of clinical symptoms was recorded 5 days after beginning of the treatment (tendon anisoreflexia and swaying reduced). At this time-point CSF cell count normalized (4 white blood cells with 100% lymphocyte). The treatment was followed by monthly administration of human normal immunoglobulin in the dose of 0.4 mg/kg. Three, nine and eighteen months after beginning of the treatment the patient had two more MRI investigations of the brain that showed positive dynamics of the disease: reduction of demyelination foci and no accumulation of contrast agents (Figs. 1 and 2). Her neurological deficits disappeared completely in 3 months. No relapses were observed over 24 months of observation.

### 3. DISCUSSION

Immunobiological action of immunoglobulin is believed to contribute to the treatment efficacy due to the presence of antibodies against various infectious agents (virus of measles, influenza, varicella, parotitis, poliomyelitis, rubella, herpes-associated rous, hepatitis A and B, pneumococcus) [43,91-101]. Its efficacy has been demonstrated in several controlled studies [98]. A broad spectrum of immunological mechanisms is thought to be relevant in

**Table 1. Laboratory tests and results**

<b>Test</b>	<b>Result</b>
CBC, UA	all within normal limits
ESR	all within normal limits
ALT/AST/bilirubin	all within normal limits
Electrolytes, BUN/Cr	all within normal limits
ECG	normal
Ophthalmic exam	normal
CSF	8 white blood cells with 100% lymphocytes
PCR analysis of CSF for HSV 1 and 2	negative
PCR analysis of CSF for EBV, CMV	negative
VDRL of CSF	negative
Oligoclonal IgG bands	not detected
Serum fluorescent treponemal antibodies	negative
Serologic tests for HIV	negative
Serologic tests for CMV	negative
Serologic tests for toxoplasma	negative
Serologic tests for HSV	negative
Serologic tests for rubella	negative
Serologic tests for measles	negative
Serologic tests for EBV	negative
Serologic tests for leptospira	negative
Viral hepatitis serology	negative
Anaerobic bacteria	negative
Screening for autoimmune diseases	negative



**Fig. 1. Contrast-enhanced T2-weighted MRI data of the patient G., 42 years old. Multiple, large foci of high intensity of signal (of different sizes) in the T2 mode, located in the frontal, temporal and parietal lobes of both hemispheres**



**Fig. 2. MRI data of the same patient after 9 months from the beginning of the treatment**

explaining the properties of IV Ig therapy, such as supply of idiotypic antibodies, neutralization of complement-mediated effects [1,101,102], inhibition of complement binding and prevention of membranolytic attack complex (MAC), modulation of Fc receptors or T-cell function. In the treatment of neurological autoimmune disorders, only a few of these mechanisms seem to be relevant like the modulation of complement activation and activation and activity of macrophages [43,100]. Experimental data show that in case of inflammatory diseases immunoglobulin may influence the local immune response in the central nervous system, regulating nitric oxide release and microglia function [43,103]. Remyelination stimulation can be a possible consequence of immunoglobulin use [43,103,104].

The use of intravenous immunoglobulin (IVIG) has been reported in several case studies as well, either alone [43,105] or in combination with corticosteroids [43,106]. There is a lack of specific recommendations for the long-term management of recurrent and multiphasic ADEM [107]. But several studies have reported a reduction of relapses after the long-term administration (every 4 weeks for 48 weeks) of intravenous immunoglobulin to patients with relapsing-remitting multiple sclerosis [107]. The results of the studies [43] have shown more significant reduction of the level of neurological disorders of the patients who received intravenous immunoglobulin in the dose of 0.4 g per 1 kg of mass of body within 5 days 1 month after the hormonal pulse-therapy, using methylprednisolone in the dose of 500-1000 mg

daily in 200 ml of isotonic sodium chloride solution (within 5 days), comparing to the patients with placebo treatment (200 ml of isotonic sodium chloride solution) after the hormonal pulse-therapy. Over a 24-month observation period, the patients of the main group (who received intravenous immunoglobulin in the dose of 0.4 g per 1 kg of mass of body within 5 days 1 month after the hormonal pulse-therapy) had fewer relapses of disseminated encephalomyelitis comparing to the patients with placebo treatment. The results of the other studies and this case report proved that immunoglobulin administration contributes not only to the reduction of clinical manifestations of the disease by decreasing the level of neurologic deficit but also helps to prevent the disease relapses.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This case report confirms a positive therapeutic efficacy of intravenous immunoglobulin in the treatment of patient with ADEM – reduction of clinical manifestations of the disease, in particular a decrease in neurological deficit level. Monthly intravenous immunoglobulin administration helps to prevent the disease relapses (multiphase ADEM course).

#### CONSENT

All authors declare that 'written informed consent was obtained from the patient (or other approved parties) for publication of this case report and accompanying images.

#### ETHICAL APPROVAL

According to the decision of the Ethics Committee of the O.O. Bogomolets National Medical University (Kyiv city, Ukraine), the investigations described in these articles have been carried out according to modern scientific standards. All patients signed informed consent form. There have been provided the measures ensuring safety of the patients, respect of their rights and dignity as well as moral and ethical standards in accordance with the human rights principles of the Declaration of Helsinki. Ethics Committee does not have any objections against publishing these articles (protocol number 48 dated 29.09.2010.)

#### COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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