

Clinical presentation of subacute sclerosing panencephalitis in Papua New Guinea

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Abstract

Eighty-three children presented at Goroka Base Hospital in the Eastern Highlands Province (EHP) of Papua New Guinea over a period of 3 years and 9 months between February 1997 and November 2000 were confirmed to have subacute sclerosing panencephalitis (SSPE). Confirmation of the diagnosis was based on the demonstration of high titres of measles antibodies in the cerebrospinal fluid and/or serum in association with clinical features supportive of SSPE, including characteristic electroencephalographic changes and amplification of measles virus genome by reverse transcriptase polymerase chain reaction in some cases. The mean cerebrospinal fluid and serum enzyme immunoassay antibody levels among the SSPE patients were 38 250 and 860 580, respectively. The mean age of onset of SSPE was 7.9 +/- 2.6 years and ranged between 2 and 14 years. The overall male to female ratio was 1.2:1 and 1.4:1 for EHP.