Case Report

Lump in the Throat – an Algorithm for the Actions of a Physician

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Abstract

Diagnosis and treatment of patients with complaints of the “lump in the throat” remain a complex multidisciplinary problem. This is due to the polyetiology of factors causing similar symptoms and an empirical approach to the treatment. “Lump in the throat” is one of the clinical manifestations of upper respiratory tract paresthesia. According to the literature data, there is the reason for referral to an otolaryngologist in 4.1 to 5.0% of cases.

The objective of the research was to optimize and improve the diagnosis and pathogenetic approach to the “lump in the throat” treatment.

Materials and Methods. To achieve the specified objective, a comprehensive examination of 38 patients who sought an otolaryngologist's medical advice, complaining of a “lump in the throat” at the age of 18-45 years (26 women and 12 men), was performed. For the purpose of optimal diagnostics, general clinical examination, examination of ENT organs, endoscopic examination of the nasal cavity and nasopharynx, microlaryngoscopy were performed; the condition of patients' psycho-emotional status was assessed (consultation of psychologist and psychiatrist).

Results. A comprehensive clinical study of 38 patients with complaints of the “lump in the throat” at the age of 18-45 years was performed. Psychosomatic disorders were detected in 26 patients; ENT organ diseases were present in 12 patients. All patients received treatment depending on the diagnosed somatic, otorhinolaryngological and psychosomatic pathology.

Keywords

“lump in the throat”; upper respiratory tract paresthesia; diagnostics; treatment

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Problem statement and analysis of the latest research

Diagnosis and treatment of patients with complaints of the “lump in the throat” remain a complex multidisciplinary problem. This is due to the polyetiology of factors causing similar symptoms and an empirical approach to the treatment.

“Lump in the throat” is one of the clinical manifestations of upper respiratory tract paresthesia. According to the literature data, in 4.1 to 5% of cases, there is the reason for referral to an otolaryngologist [1, 2, 3].

The “lump in the throat” symptom is found in both women and men at the age of 18 to 50 years [5, 6]. The sensation of “lump in the throat” is projected to the anterior surface of the neck, in the middle between the jugular notch and the thyroid cartilage. The “lump in the throat” is characterized by a painless sensation of a foreign body in the throat with a durable course; it is difficult to treat as it is accompanied by esophagospasm, anxiety and fear of choking. There is often dystonia, the desire to constantly swallow or cough, the feeling of film or mucus accumulation, difficulty swallow-

ing [6, 7].

Healthy people may complain of the "lump in the throat" sensation as well. If these complaints are of a constant nature and are accompanied by carcinophobia, patients seek the help of doctors of different specialties, namely otolaryngologists, neuropathologists, endocrinologists, oncologists.

The "lump in the throat" is a symptom of many diseases [1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7]. The feeling of "lump in the throat" may occur in gastroesophageal reflux disease, pathology of the esophagus, spinal column, thyroid gland, chronic diseases of ENT organs (chronic pharyngitis, recurrent tonsillitis, hypertrophy of the lingual tonsil, postnasal drip syndrome, pathology of the epiglottis, neoplasms of the larynx and laryngopharynx), as well as stylohyoid syndrome, anemia, hypofunction of the salivary glands, impaired function of the temporomandibular joint, etc. [1, 2, 3, 4, 5].

According to the literature data, in 45% of patients, the symptom of "lump in the throat" is a sign of stress, depressive states. However, many authors did not find disorders of psycho-emotional status.

The main purpose of differential diagnosis in complaints of the "lump in the throat" is to exclude organic pathology of ENT and neck organs. The absence of organic pathology is one of the indications for the performance of a comprehensive psycho-psychiatric assessment and, if necessary, prescription of psychopharmacotherapy.

The objective of the research was to optimize and improve the diagnostics and pathogenetic approach to the treatment of the "lump in the throat".

1. Materials and Methods

To achieve the specified objective, a comprehensive examination of 38 patients who sought an otolaryngologist's medical advice, complaining of the "lump in the throat" at the age of 18-45 years (26 women and 12 men), was performed.

For the purpose of optimal diagnostics, general clinical examination, examination of ENT organs, endoscopic examination of the nasal cavity and nasopharynx, microlaryngoscopy were performed; the condition of patients' psycho-emotional status was

assessed (consultation of psychologist and psychiatrist).

2. Results

As a result of a comprehensive otorhinolaryngological examination using endoscopic methods of diagnosis, in all the patients, the presence of a particular organic pathology, including coexistent pathology of the ENT organs was revealed:

- chronic rhinitis (allergic, non-allergic), postnasal drip syndrome – 18 (10%) patients;
- nasopharyngeal cyst – 3 (7.8%) patients;
- chronic hypertrophic pharyngitis in remission – 5 (13.2%) patients;
- recurrent tonsillitis – 7 (18.4%) patients;
- lingual tonsil hypertrophy – 1 (2.6%) patient;
- chronic laryngitis: catarrhal – 12 patients; atrophic – 2 patients; hypertrophic – 3 patients (44.7%);
- functional dysphonia – 24 (63.2%) patients;
- epiglottic cyst – 2 (5.2%) patients;
- laryngeal fibroma – 1 (2.6%) patient;
- reflux esophagitis – 16 (42.1%) patients;
- nodular goiter – 5 (13.1%) patients.

Patients were treated with conservative therapy in accordance with the determined diagnosis. However, complaints of the "lump in the throat" feeling persisted. Patients with laryngeal fibroma, epiglottic cyst, and nasopharyngeal cyst were treated surgically.

According to the performed psycho-psychiatric assessment, 30 (78.9%) patients were diagnosed with psycho-emotional disorders, namely somatoform disorder in 12 (31.5%) cases; anxiety-depressive disorder in 9 (23.6%) cases; hypochondrial disorders in 4 (10.5%) cases; recurrent depressive disorders in 3 (7.8%) cases; panic attacks in 2 (5.3%)

cases. Four patients refused psycho-psychiatric assessment; 8 patients hadn't had any psycho-emotional disorders. Patients with identified psychosomatic disorders were treated appropriately by a specialist.

3. Conclusions

The feeling of the "lump in the throat" is a symptom of many diseases. The algorithm for diagnostics of patients with the "lump in the throat", in addition to physical examination, should contain the detection of organic pathology of the neck organs, including those of the tumoral nature; it is necessary to comprise a comprehensive psychological-psychiatric assessment in order to diagnose psychosomatic disorders.

Treatment of patients with the "lump in the throat" should be comprehensive, taking into account the identified coexistent organic pathology and psychosomatic disorders.

Conflict of Interest

The authors stated no conflict of interest.

Financial Disclosure

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