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Intriguing Presentation of Globus Sensation

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ABSTRACT

Globus sensation, a feeling of a lump or tightness in the throat without objective findings, presents a diagnostic challenge due to its diverse etiology. This case report presents a perplexing case of globus in a young woman, highlighting the intricate interplay of physical and psychological factors and emphasizing the importance of a comprehensive evaluation to unmask the true culprit.

INTRODUCTION

Globus sensation, also known as globus pharyngeus, is a common yet challenging clinical entity. The feeling of a lump, tightness, or foreign body sensation in the throat, despite the absence of any visible abnormality, can cause significant distress and impact quality of life (1-3).

The etiology of globus is diverse and often multifactorial. Physical causes, such as gastroesophageal reflux disease, laryngeal papillomas, or vocal cord nodules, must be ruled out initially. However, in many cases, no underlying physical cause is identified, highlighting the role of psychological factors (3-5). Here we aimed to present a case with globus.

CASE PRESENTATION

A 20-year-old woman presented with a six-month history of globus sensation. She described a constant feeling of a lump in her throat, accompanied by frequent swallowing and occasional dry cough. She denied dysphagia, odynophagia, hoarseness, or weight loss. Her past medical history was unremarkable, and she denied any history of anxiety or emotional distress.

Physical examination revealed normal vital signs and no overt abnormalities in the head and neck region. Examination of the oral cavity, pharynx, and larynx using laryngoscopy was

unremarkable, with no visible lesions or structural abnormalities. Thyroid palpation was normal, and there were no palpable cervical lymph nodes.

Laboratory investigations, including complete blood count, thyroid function tests, and basic metabolic panel, were within normal limits. Upper gastrointestinal endoscopy and esophageal manometry also yielded normal results, ruling out gastroesophageal reflux disease or motility disorders.

Given the negative physical and laboratory findings, a psychological evaluation was recommended. The patient admitted to experiencing mild, chronic anxiety related to academic and social pressures. Further examination revealed subtle laryngeal hypersensitivity and a tendency to exaggerate normal throat sensations, consistent with a diagnosis of psychogenic cough and globus sensation.

DISCUSSION

Anxiety, stress, and depression can manifest as somatic symptoms, including globus sensation and psychogenic cough. These symptoms often arise from heightened laryngeal awareness and hypersensitivity to normal throat sensations, leading to misinterpretations as a foreign body or lump. The diagnostic workup for globus requires a holistic approach. A

thorough physical examination, including laryngoscopy, and appropriate investigations to rule out physical causes are crucial. However, a high index of suspicion for psychological factors, particularly in the absence of physical findings, is essential. A detailed psychosocial assessment and collaboration with mental health professionals can be invaluable in confirming the diagnosis and guiding treatment (6-10).

Management of globus sensation, particularly in cases with a predominant psychological component, focuses on addressing the underlying emotional trigger. Cognitive-behavioral therapy, relaxation techniques, and stress management approaches can be highly effective in alleviating symptoms and reducing laryngeal hypersensitivity. In some cases, antidepressant or anxiolytic medications may be considered to manage comorbid anxiety or depression (1-4).

This case report underscores the complex nature of globus sensation and the importance of considering both physical and psychological factors in its diagnosis and management. Embracing a multidisciplinary approach, combining physical and mental health expertise, is crucial for unlocking the secrets of this chameleon of the throat and optimizing outcomes for patients suffering from this common yet vexing symptom.

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