



Reflex Asystolic Syncope: results of a pilot parent questionnaire



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Introduction

Reflex Asystolic Syncope, often called "Reflex Anoxic Seizures" or "White Breath Holding Spells", is a common but under reported neurally mediated syncope presenting in infants and toddlers. The child collapses, pale, stiff and typically asystolic, generally in response to a sudden pain or surprise. Ictal recordings show asystole commonly from 6 to 30 seconds^{1,2,3}.

Syncope Trust And Reflex anoxic Seizures

STARS is a parent and carer information and support group set up by families of affected children 10 years ago. The group realised that its members could contribute valuable information about RAS and how it seems to affect families.

Methods

A standard postal questionnaire was sent to all members and those joining the support group. 289/500 (58%) were returned.

Results

Age at 1 st attack	12 months
Reported duration of attack	1.5 minutes
Post-ictal drowsiness	1 hour
	%
Remission by 5 years of age	75
Attributed family problems	66
Sleep problems	50
Family history of "fits or faints"	50

Discussion

The study was subject to a number of biases, only some families with affected children joined the support group, and only some returned the questionnaire. It is likely that respondents were more educated and had more severely affected children than typical cases. Even so, the results gave a remarkable insight into RAS and how it was experienced by families.

Conclusions

RAS typically presents as a severe convulsive syncope. 75% seemed to attain remission by 5 years of age. RAS was perceived as adversely affecting family functioning and the child's behaviour. A positive family history suggested a genetic overlap with paroxysmal disorders presenting as "fits or faints", in at least some cases.

Further work

STARS together with child neurology and child & adolescent psychiatric advisors planned a revised questionnaire to look in more detail at some of these issues. A control group would be ascertained and a follow-up survey of original respondents would be undertaken. www.stars.org.uk

References

1. Stephenson JBP (1978). Reflex anoxic seizures ('white breath-holding'). Nonepileptic vagal attacks. *Archives of Disease in Childhood* **53**:193-200.
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3. Aicardi J (1994). Diagnosis and Differential Diagnosis. In *Epilepsy in Children*. Raven Press, New York, 354-363.