Marchiafava — Bignami Syndrome

A 47 years old driver, heavy alcohol drinker with no significant past medical history was admitted with altered sensorium since a day. On examination the patient was disoriented in time, place and person and drowsy. He was haemodynamically stable, was moving all the four extremities, but had generalised rigidity. Rest of the examination was normal. All the blood investigations were normal. Random blood sugar on admission was 110mg/dl, CSF examination and LFT were normal. A CT scan and MRI scan (Fig. 1) showed white matter hypodensity seen in the corpus callosum suggestive of Marchiafava Bignami disease.

Marchiafava Bignami disease is a demyelinating disorder of white matter of the brain, commonly affecting the corpus callosum. It is seen in chronic heavy alcohol drinkers. It is a radiological diagnosis as clinical features are variable and non-specific. It may progress to dementia.

The patient was treated as for hepatic encephalopathy. He recovered gradually and was discharged after a few days.

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Fig. 1 : MRI of brain (lateral view) showing hypodensity in the corpus callosum (arrow).