

CENTRAL NERVOUS SYSTEM (CNS)

What is Central Nervous System?

Central nervous system (CNS) vasculitis is inflammation of the blood vessels confined to the brain, spinal cord and its covering.

What causes CNS?

There is no known cause of CNS; but it is not contagious.

Researchers believe that some sort of event, such as a viral infection, may trigger an inappropriate immune response directed by mistake to the small and medium sized arteries of the brain.

Who gets CNS?

Primary Angiitis of the Central Nervous System (PACNS) and Benign Angiopathy of the Central Nervous System (BACNS) are two different types of CNS.

PACNS occurs equally between the sexes, while BACNS patients tend to be young women, with histories of headaches. Most patients get the disease in their 40s or 50s. However, children as young as three and adults as old as 78, have been diagnosed with CNS.

What are the symptoms?

The most common symptoms of CNS are confusion, headache, personality changes and muscle weakness/paralysis similar to what happens when someone suffers a stroke.

Other symptoms include seizures, bleeding in the head, coma and vision loss. Symptoms usually occur over the course of several months, but can also occur very quickly. All of these symptoms can be mimicked by a variety of other conditions.

How is CNS diagnosed?

Nearly all patients require an angiogram or biopsy of the brain. MRI and CT scanning are also used. None of these alone can be diagnostic of CNS.

A common concern is that angiography in a patient with possible cerebral vessel inflammation is unsafe, and may result in complications. A lumbar puncture may also be performed to look for abnormalities in the cerebrospinal fluid.

What is the prognosis?

Treating patients with immunosuppressive therapy has resulted in encouraging outcomes.

What is the treatment?

Some patients with PACNS respond well to treatment with high doses of steroids alone. Others require the addition of immunosuppressive drugs to the steroid regimen. BACNS patients may be treated with calcium-channel blockers for a few weeks, along with a short course of steroids.

What is Vasculitis?

Vasculitis is an inflammation of the blood vessels, arteries, veins or capillaries. Vasculitis is a family of diseases. The cause of vasculitis is unknown, but through research and treatment, outcomes have improved significantly over the past 20 years.

Continued research is essential for further advances in these diseases, which can be life-threatening.

About the Vasculitis Foundation

The Vasculitis Foundation (VF) is the largest international patient support group for people with vasculitis.

Through its website, newsletter, brochures, informational materials, medical consultants, symposia and chapters, VF raises awareness and educates its patients, family members and friends.



Support

Awareness

Research

www.VasculitisFoundation.org

800.277.9474