Reviewer's report

Title: Resting tachycardia, a warning sign in anorexia nervosa: case report

Version: 1 Date: 30 March 2004

Reviewer number: 1

Reviewer's report:

General
In this report, the authors presented the case of a 52-year old woman with a 20-year history of anorexia nervosa, hospitalized due to progressive leg pain and weakness. A complete clinical evaluation, including biochemistry, revealed resting tachycardia (HR ~ 105 bpm), which was justified by the presence of left lower extremity cellulitis. In fact, with antibiotic therapy HR decreased to 45 bpm, despite minimal restoration of body weight. The authors concluded that resting tachycardia should prompt a search for potentially life-threatening conditions in anorexia nervosa patients who present with nonspecific symptoms. The manuscript is clearly written. Although, we have a number of criticism of this article.

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

Bradycardia is an usual characteristics of overt anorexia nervosa. This reflects a vagal hyperactivity (Galetta F, 2003), which can considered a protective factor for arrhythmic risk (Tsuji H, 1996). On the contrary, resting tachycardia is uncommon in this condition and may represent an underlying risk for arrhythmias and sudden death, when associated with sympa-tho-vagal imbalance. In fact, autonomic cardiac dysfunction with a decrease in parasympathetic activity and a relatively increase in sympathetic activity could be detrimental and can contribute to the higher cardiovascular mortality in patients with anorexia nervosa (Rechlin T, 1998; Algra A, 1993).

In the present case-report, however, tachycardia is justified as a normal consequence of the underlying infection. There is little new or novel information presented. It could be interesting the evaluation of the autonomic nervous function by assessing heart rate variability.

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Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No