Hyponatremic Seizure Associated with Concomitant Use of Standard Dose Trimethoprim-Sulfamethoxazole with a Diuretic

A 64-year-old hypertensive female taking Lisinopril-HCTZ (20-12.5mg) combination pill was started on TMP-SMX (160-800 mg) twice daily for left fourth toe blister. She presented to the emergency room four days later with fatigue, confusion, and a witnessed grandmal seizure. Physical examination, electrocardiogram, urinalysis, chest X-ray, and cranial computed tomography were unremarkable. Serum Na was measured at 119 mmol/L (136-145 mmol/L) compared to 131 mmol/L last week prior to antibiotic use. Other labs included TSH 0.94U/L, glucose 109 mg/dl, K 3.9 (3.5-5.1 mmol/L), SOsm 245 mOsm/L/kg (280-303 mOsm/Kg), BUN 10 mg/dL (7-18 mg/dL), Scr 0.9 mg/dL (0.4-0.9 mg/dL), BUN: Scr 11.1 (10.0-20.0) and creatinine clearance 52.2 mL/min using Cockcroft-Gault equation. Urinary indices showed UrOsm 205 mOsm/kg (50-800 mOsm/kg), UNa 22 mmol/L, UCr 24.5 mg/dL and FENa 0.7%. TMP-SMX and Lisinopril-HCTZ were discontinued. The patient received hypertonic saline. Serum Na gradually improved to 131 mmol/L over 24 hours and the patient’s confusion resolved without further seizures.

Trimethoprim, a heterocyclic weak base, structurally mimics potassium-sparing diuretics, and at higher doses causes natriuresis by blocking sodium reabsorption in the distal nephron [4]. Hyponatremia, while usually asymptomatic, can exert neurological sequelae. In our case, standard dose TMP-SMX lead to salt wasting and severe hyponatremia which manifested as seizure; its dose-dependent effect was perhaps potentiated by the concomitant use of a diuretic which can induce renal dysfunction and affect sodium and water hemostasis.

References