

Poster 70

Persistent Positive Visual Phenomena Revisited

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Introduction:

Patients occasionally report persistent positive visual phenomena (PPVP) with features that differ from those typically associated with visual migraine. Often, such PPVP are described, or can be interpreted, as being consistent with “visual snow.” We report a series of patients with PPVP and “visual snow” that provides additional clinical commentary of the visual and clinical features of this disorder.

Methods:

A retrospective analysis of all patients who presented to a single Neuro-Ophthalmologist from 2009-2013 with “visual snow” was performed. The charts coded with the diagnosis of “visual snow” were reviewed for information in regard to 17 features of the medical history and visual presentation. All patients were interviewed by telephone to clarify the details of our chart review.

Results:

A total of 20 patients with “visual snow” were identified. The majority of patients reported visual symptoms *only* of “visual snow.” In all cases, the qualitative descriptions were remarkably similar, nearly stereotypical. No patient with isolated “visual snow” experienced disruption of function. MRI scans of all patients were normal. No patient had evidence of neurological disease. Anxiety and depression were present in a minority of patients. Most patients’ symptoms persisted without significant variation for months to years. No treatment attempted by any patient seemed to be effective. A minority of patients reported visual symptoms in addition to the visual snow. Many patients had a history of migraine.

Conclusions:

PPVP with features of “visual snow” is a benign phenomenon that does not require diagnostic investigation or medical intervention. The etiology of visual snow is not known, and migraine remains a plausible factor. The fact that the spontaneous description of visual snow is so stereotypical strongly suggests that it is caused by some biological perturbation, and is not simply a reaction secondary to psychological factors, as is sometimes suggested.

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