Photo quiz: A 58-year-old female with altered mental status

Morgan A. Pence
Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis

Carey-Ann D. Burnham
Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.wustl.edu/open_access_pubs

Recommended Citation
https://digitalcommons.wustl.edu/open_access_pubs/3491

This Open Access Publication is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Commons@Becker. It has been accepted for inclusion in Open Access Publications by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons@Becker. For more information, please contact vanam@wustl.edu.
Photo Quiz: A 58-Year-Old Female with Altered Mental Status

Morgan A. Pence and Carey-Ann D. Burnham


Updated information and services can be found at:
http://jcm.asm.org/content/52/11/3835

These include:
Receive: RSS Feeds, eTOCs, free email alerts (when new articles cite this article),

Information about commercial reprint orders: http://journals.asm.org/site/misc/reprints.xhtml
To subscribe to to another ASM Journal go to: http://journals.asm.org/site/subscriptions/
A 58-year-old woman with a history of hypertension and anemia presented to the emergency department with a 7-month history of progressive exhaustion, shortness of breath, palpitations, and dizziness, in addition to a 20-pound weight loss. She was diagnosed with Waldenström’s macroglobulinemia and placed on dexamethasone. The patient was scheduled for chemotherapy and subsequently discharged a few days later. Three weeks after her initial presentation, she presented to the emergency department with altered mental status. Her husband reported that she had complained of a headache, nausea, and vomiting the day prior to presentation. A lumbar puncture was performed, and her cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) had an opening pressure of 38 cm H2O (normal range, 8 to 21 cm H2O); the patient was empirically started on vancomycin, ceftriaxone, acyclovir, and dexamethasone. Her CSF showed a total cell count of 422 cells/µl, with 169 nucleated cells/µl and a differential of 42% neutrophils, 6% lymphocytes, and 52% monocytes. CSF glucose and protein levels were <20 mg/dl (serum glucose level, 225 mg/dl) and 659 mg/dl, respectively. The CSF specimen was submitted to the microbiology laboratory for culture; the cytospin Gram stain of the specimen is shown in Fig. 1. Two sets of concomitant blood cultures were submitted, and the same pathogen was isolated from both cultures.