Tetanus in a 19-year-old Japanese Woman

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A 19-year-old Japanese woman presented with a sudden-onset of difficulty in opening her mouth (Picture A). Trismus and cervicofacial involuntary movements in the patient were easily triggered by stimulation. Although there was no recent history of trauma, minor skin disorders were seen on her foot (Picture B). The patient’s medical history revealed that she had never been vaccinated with tetanus toxoid. We diagnosed the patient with tetanus and administered tetanus immune globulin (5,000 units), toxoid vaccination, and intravenous penicillin G (2,400 million units per day). The patient’s neuromuscular manifestations gradually improved and she was discharged on day 10.

Tetanus is a fatal disease in developing countries where vaccination is unavailable. In Japan, with the introduction of preventive immunization in 1968, the incidence of tetanus has dramatically declined. Presently, almost all Japanese cases are in patients over forty years of age who had been born before the implementation of routine vaccination; teenagers are scarcely reported as having this disease (1). For cases in which tetanus is suspected, urgent treatment is necessary (2).

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References


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