Brain Disorders/Neurological

Air embolism: diagnosis with single-photon emission tomography and successful hyperbaric oxygen therapy.

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Droggetti L, Giganti M, Memmo A, Zatelli R.

Department of Anaesthesia and Intensive Care Medicine, S. Anna Hospital, I-44100 Ferrara, Italy.

Venous air embolism may occur when the surgical field is above the level of the heart. We present a case of venous air embolism in a patient undergoing percutaneous nephrolithotripsy in the prone position and presenting with blindness and neurological deficits 8 h later. The clinical diagnosis of paradoxical air embolism was confirmed by early single-photon emission tomography (SPET), whereas magnetic resonance imaging including diffusion-weighted imaging (DW-MRI) was diagnostic only 30 h later. Hyperbaric oxygen therapy was successful. In this case, early DW-MRI scan was inconclusive, but a SPET study of the brain appeared to be useful in confirming the clinical diagnosis. Early hyperbaric oxygen was demonstrated to be a successful therapy. Br J Anaesth 2002; 89: 775-8

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