



The Emergency Department Evaluation and Treatment of Patients with Suspected CNS Infection

Learning Objectives

- Review the optimal clinical evaluation, diagnostic testing, and treatment of Emergency Department patients with altered mental status and suspected CNS infection.
- Discuss procedures and protocols that will assist the emergency physician in providing care to these critically ill and injured patients.

Background

One of the critical requirements of the emergency physician is to be able to efficiently diagnose and effectively treat patients who present to the Emergency Department with altered mental status and suspected CNS infection. This lecture will highlight two specific skills that are part of this overall treatment strategy: the physical exam and diagnostic evaluation of these patients and the use of a protocol that includes antibiotics, antivirals, steroids and other therapies in the management of patients with suspected CNS infection.

In this Brain Injury Course, FERNE would like to stress the use of specific procedures and protocols in managing patients with neurological illness and injury. In effect, the goal is to take a surgeon's approach to treating medical problems in the Emergency Department, including complications related to CNS infection.

Key Clinical Questions

- What are the clinical signs and symptoms in patients with CNS infection?
- How should patients with suspected CNS infection in the setting of altered mental status be managed?
- What are the roles for the following therapies in the setting of suspected CNS infection: antibiotics, antivirals, steroids, and anti-epileptic drugs?

Featured Procedures or Protocols

- Diagnostic protocol using the physical and neurological exam, CT neuroimaging, and lumbar puncture in the evaluation of ED patients with suspected CNS infection.
- Treatment protocol utilizing antibiotics, antivirals, and steroids in the management of patients with suspected CNS infection.

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