

Definitely, Maybe: It's not always Epilepsy

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Background: Psychogenic Non-Epileptic Seizures (PNES) are underrecognized due to variety of symptoms (including behavioral abnormalities) and duration (usually more than 5 minutes).

Case History: A 37 y/o woman has been treated with carbamazepine for 20 years for post-meningioma excision epilepsy. He presented with asthenia and, during observation, he also experienced loss of consciousness accompanied by generalized hypertonia, tremor and hyperpnea. Vital signs remained normal. Due to a suspicion of seizure, diazepam was administered followed by propofol and midazolam which resolved hypertonia and led to slow recovery. Cranial CT scan and serial arterial blood gas revealed: malacic hypodensity in the left parietal lobe (site of the previous surgery) and elevated lactate levels (Table 1). The next day, a neurologist ordered an EEG, which showed normal results. The patient was discharged with diagnosis of PNES.

Discussion: The atypical presentation led us to question a previously established diagnosis. Normal EEG supports the hypothesis of PNES and elevated lactate levels suggest muscle exhaustion [1]. Case series in patients with a history of neurosurgery demonstrate that PNES is underdiagnosed. This often results in unnecessary exposure to antiepileptic drugs. Ultimately, diagnosis within a somatoform disorder framework, SSRI medications and cognitive-behavioural therapy are widely accepted as the preferred approach for these patients [2].

References

1. Lou Isenberg A, Jensen ME, Lindelof M (2020) Plasma-lactate levels in simulated seizures An Observational study. *Seizure* 76: 47-49.
2. Loebenstein R, Gofrit SG, Eltity M, Magiel E, Fennig U, et al. (2025) Case series of functional non epileptic seizures (PNES) in patients with brain tumors. *Neurol Sci* 46: 4615-4621.

Table 1: Arterial and Venous Blood Gas During Hospitalization

	VBG on admission	First ABG	Second ABG
pH	7.17	7.30	7.37
pCO ₂ (mmHg)	62	28	36
pO ₂ (mmHg)	36	118	506
Lactates (mmol/L)	11,9	10,6	4,9
P/F ratio		562	506
PaO ₂		115	668
sO ₂ (%)	51,7	98,2	100
HCO ₃ (mmol/L)	22,6	13,8	20,8
paO ₂ /pAO ₂		1,03	0,76

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