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## The Significant Role of Consultation Psychiatrist in Preventing, Identifying and Treating Wernicke's Encephalopathy

M. Spariosu<sup>1</sup>, D. Coira<sup>1</sup>, R. Coira<sup>2</sup>, C. Wassef<sup>3</sup>, J. Emolo<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Psychiatry and Behavioral Medicine, Hackensack UMC, Hackensack, USA ; <sup>2</sup>Medical School, St George's University, St George's, Grenada ; <sup>3</sup>Medical School, Rutgers New Jersey, Newark, USA

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**Introduction:** Wernicke's encephalopathy is an acute neuropsychiatric disorder which occurs as a direct result of a thiamine deficiency. Prevalence of Wernicke's encephalopathy is 1.4-2.2 % in the general population with an increased rate in known alcoholics of 12.5 %, and 35% in alcoholics with cerebellar damage. Wernicke's encephalopathy is missed on clinical examination in up to 75-80% of cases and only verified on autopsy. Thiamine deficiency can occur due to either alcoholic or nonalcoholic causes.

### Objectives:

1. Early and adequate intervention may **prevent** the development of Wernicke's encephalopathy.
2. Early **detection** of Wernicke's encephalopathy is crucial in preventing the severe neuropsychiatric complications that may result.
3. Aggressive **treatment** with high dose thiamine may reverse symptoms of Wernicke's encephalopathy and prevent the progression to Korsakoff's syndrome.

### Aims:

1. Adequate and early prevention and treatment **reduces** morbidity and mortality associated with Wernicke's encephalopathy.
2. Proper medical intervention significantly **decreases** the length of stay.
3. By preventing progress of Wernicke's encephalopathy to Korsakoff syndrome, the cost of care can be significantly **diminished**.

**Methods:** We present a case series of patients with Wernicke's encephalopathy that were identified and treated by consultation-liaison psychiatrist and review of relevant literature.

**Results:** Seven patients were diagnosed with Wernicke's encephalopathy. All patients were aggressively treated with high dose IV thiamine. All patients improved and were discharged in a stable condition. None of them progressed to Korsakoff.

**Conclusions:** The role of psychiatry in preventing, identifying, treating Wernicke's encephalopathy and educating the primary team had significant impact on improving patient's care and prognosis.