

Etiology of vertigo in children

Written by BalatsourasDimitrios MD, PhD, ORL - Last Updated Sunday, 15 June 2014 00:02

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Balatsouras Dimitrios,

MD,PhD.ORL

balats@panafonet.gr

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Balatsouras DG, Kaberos A, Assimakopoulos D, Katotomichelakis M, Economou NC, Korres SG.

ENT Department of Tzanion General Hospital, 11 Zani and Afentouli Street, GR-18536 Piraeus, and Ioannina University School of Medicine, Greece.

OBJECTIVE: To detect the most common causes of vertigo in children.

METHODS: Fifty-four children (20 boys and 34 girls) aged 3-16 years, who presented with vertigo attacks during a 3-year period, were studied. A detailed medical history for vestibular symptoms and migraine was obtained from our patients or their parents. All patients underwent otolaryngologic, ophthalmologic and neurologic clinical evaluation.

A detailed laboratory examination, including serologic tests for viral infections, was also obtained. Additionally, a complete audiological and neurotologic evaluation was performed. Computed tomography (CT) scans and magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) were obtained in selected cases.

RESULTS: Viral infections, benign paroxysmal vertigo of childhood and migraine were the most common causes of vertigo accounting for approximately 65% of our patients. Otitis media, head trauma, benign paroxysmal positional vertigo, Meniere's disease and brain tumor were less common causes of vertigo.

CONCLUSIONS: A peripheral type of vertigo was found in most cases. Diagnostic approach in vertigo in children should include a detailed history and clinical examination in conjunction with a test battery of audiological and neurotologic tests. When a central cause of vertigo is suspected an MRI or CT scan should be ordered.