

Highlighted words are explained in Common Terms and Definitions sheet

Most people reading this need no introduction to Behçet's disease (BD). This readership is either affected by this condition or is involved in care of those who are. We as neurologists are involved in the care.

Involvement of the neurological system is called neuro-Behçet's and is among the most disabling complications of BD. Thankfully, it is not that common and affects about 10% of people with BD. Neuro-Behçet's usually occurs in combination with inflammation of the other organs systems such as eyes, joints, skin etc. and only rarely separately.

In this article we intend to discuss neuro-Behçet's disease and how it can affect people. What symptoms people have and how we can investigate, diagnose and treat this condition?

How does neuro-Behçet's disease present?

Neuro-Behçet's disease can cause inflammation of the brain/spinal tissue directly, or can cause inflammation and blockage of the blood supplying them (usually veins rather than arteries).

If there is direct inflammation of the brain tissue, people can present with one feature or a combination of features including weakness, pins and needles, loss of co-ordination, double vision, confusion, fits and meningitis. On the other hand, if the blood vessels (veins) are inflamed and blocked, patients present with symptoms of raised intracranial pressure such as headache or blurred vision. They usually have some other background BD symptoms such as mouth ulcers, genital ulcers or eye symptoms. Arteries are rarely affected.

Patients with BD commonly have headaches. Headaches can occur because of neuro-Behçet's per se or more often because of other reasons such as migraines. It is a neurologists' job to look into these symptoms and decide what further tests or treatments are needed.

What are the tests and treatments required?

Specialist tests such as a brain scan or lumbar puncture might be required. Treatment depends on the pattern of presentation – that is, whether the brain tissue is inflamed or blood vessels are affected. Brain tissue inflammation is more difficult to treat, can recur and might result in disability.

In general, an early and strong immune therapy is needed for a longer time. Neuro-Behçet's with blood vessel involvement requires shorter-term treatment once the initial crisis is over.

Behçet's disease experts differ in their approach to treatment based on their experience. There were no clear guidelines on the main issues in diagnosis and treatment of neuro-Behçet's disease, so we set out to do this project.

International Neuro-Behçet's Recommendations Project

We developed clinical and practical guidelines on the key issues in the diagnosis and treatment of neuro-Behçet's to assist clinicians involved in care of these patients. As BD can affect different organs at the same time, it was imperative that we involved specialists from different fields to cover the treatment in a holistic way.

It took us almost 3 years to complete the above project. An advisory group made of 52 international Behçet's disease experts from 20 countries and 11 different medical specialities, including 23 neurologists and voluntary patient representatives, worked together on this project. Jan Mather was the patient group representative from the Behçet's Society. Most of the UK specialists involved are also members. A full list of group members is given at the end of this article.

We identified important clinical issues that needed addressing under the umbrella of this project. These covered diagnosis and treatment of neuro-Behçet's. This was presented at the ICBD meeting in 2010 in London. We looked at the previously published studies thoroughly and systematically. Conclusions were drawn from the literature and were discussed and voted on. Only high scoring recommendations that passed the consensus criteria were given out as International Consensus Recommendations. These were published in the *Journal of Neurology*. The full article can be accessed online under Journal of Neurology (2014) volume 261 Sept 2014 – ([J Neurol. 2014 Sep;261\(9\):1662-76.](#)) [It might be useful if you mention this article to your treating clinician.](#)

This project brought up clear and easily usable diagnostic criteria for neuro-Behçet's. We also made 16 practical clinical recommendations for diagnosis and treatment. We hope that these will be a useful resource to the Behçet's disease community.

We would like to thank all members of the advisory and consensus group members who helped towards this project. Special thanks go to Jan Mather for representing the patients on the Advisory Group. Without their help this project would not have been possible.

Dr Seema Kalra, Neurology Specialist Registrar

Dr Adnan Al-Araji, Consultant Neurologist, Neuro-Behçet's Clinic, Royal Stoke University Hospital, Stoke on Trent, UK.

List of all advisory and consensus group members in alphabetical order

Prof Gulsen Akman-Demir, Neurology, Turkey
Prof Sarmed Al Fahad, Neurology, Dubai
Dr Adnan Al-Araji, Neurology, UK
Dr Andreas Altenburg, Dermatology, Germany
Prof Ayse Altintas, Neurology, Turkey
Dr Thurayya Arayssi, Rheumatology, Qatar
Prof Marcel Arnold, Neurology, Switzerland
Prof Samir Helmy Assaad-Khalil, Internal Medicine, Egypt
Dr John Bamford, Neurology, UK
Prof Eldad Ben-Chetrit, Rheumatology, Israel
Prof Peter Berlit, Neurology, Germany
Dr Saeed Bohlega, Neurology, Saudi Arabia
Prof Panagiota Boura, Internal Medicine & Clinical Immunology, Greece
Dr Kenneth T Calamia, Rheumatology, USA
Prof Simon Carette, Rheumatology, Canada
Prof Cris S Constantinescu, Neurology, UK
Prof Khaled Elmuntaser, Internal Medicine & Rheumatology, Libya
Dr Luis R Espinoza, Rheumatology, USA
Dr Oliver Findling, Neurology, Switzerland
Dr Loic Guillevin, Internal Medicine, France
Dr Afshin Borhani Haghighi, Neurology, Iran
Prof Dorian O Haskard, Rheumatology, UK
Prof Shunsei Hirohata, Rheumatology & Internal medicine, Japan
Prof Habib Houman, Internal Medicine & Immunology, Tunisia
Dr Seema Kalra, Neurology, UK
Dr Orhun H Kantarci, Neurology, USA
Dr Mary Keogan, Immunology, UK
Dr Desmond Kidd, Neurology, UK
Prof Isabelle Kone-Paut, Paediatrics, France

Dr Murat Kurtuncu, Neurology, Turkey
 Dr Loredana La Mantia, Neurology/Neuropathology, Italy
 Dr Wafa Madanat, Rheumatology, Jordan
 Dr Alfred Mahr, Internal Medicine, France
 Dr Sergio Martínez-Yélamos, Neurology, Spain
 Ms Janet Mather, Patient representative, UK
 Prof Philip I. Murray, Ophthalmology, UK
 Dr Alex Olivé, Rheumatology, Spain
 Dr Ignazio Olivieri, Rheumatology, Italy
 Dr Norberto Ortego-Centeno, Internal Medicine, Spain
 Prof Salih Pay, Rheumatology & Internal medicine, Turkey
 Dr Cristina Ramo, Neurology, Spain
 Prof Sahar N Saleem, Neuro-radiology, Egypt
 Dr Carlo Salvarani, Rheumatology, Italy
 Prof Neil Scolding, Neurology, UK
 Prof Petros Sfikakis, Internal Medicine, Greece
 Prof Alan Silman, Rheumatology, UK
 Prof Aksel Siva, Neurology, Turkey
 Dr Roser Solans-Laqué, Internal Medicine & Autoimmune Diseases, Spain
 Dr Thomas Stache, Neurology, Germany
 Prof Miles Stanford, Ophthalmology, UK
 Dr Nadera J Sweiss, Medicine, USA
 Dr Jan VanLaar, Internal Medicine/Immunology, Netherlands
 Dr Nagagopal Venna, Neurology, USA

Explanation of words highlighted in factsheet in the order they appear

Inflammation: the way the body responds to irritation, infection or injury. Blood collects in infected areas causing reddening, swelling and pain
 Intracranial: within the skull
 Recur: something that happens again from time to time
 Holistic: a holistic approach is one which concentrates on the whole body or person not just one part of it
 ICBD: the International Conference on Behçet’s Disease

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