

Kleine-Levin Syndrome, Sleep Apnea, and Prolonged Sleep Episodes in a 26-Year-Old Patient

In the realm of sleep, the story of Kumbhakarna, a character from the Indian epic, the Mahabharata, comes to mind. Kumbhakarna was known for his unique sleep pattern—he would slumber for extended periods and awaken primarily for essential activities like eating and defending his kingdom. This real-life case mirrors this distinctive behavior, as a 26-year-old male patient has a medical history marked by recurrent episodes of prolonged sleep that typically last about eight days, during which he arises solely for vital activities like voiding and meals. These episodes occur at a rate of 1-2 times annually or with intervals of 1-1.5 years, consistently spanning eight days. Initial episodes were as extensive as three weeks, but have since decreased in duration.

These episodes are indicative of Kleine-Levin Syndrome, a rare condition that leads to periodic hypersomnolence. During these episodes, the patient experiences a profound disconnection from the external world, rendering him unable to recognize familiar individuals. Furthermore, he encounters an insatiable hunger, even willing to consume non-food items. These episodes gradually start resolving by the 5th day, and he is completely normalized by the 8th day. The most recent episode occurred in December 2022, underscoring the chronic nature of this condition.

In addition to the patient's persistent battle with Kleine-Levin Syndrome (KLS), a rare disorder characterized by periodic hypersomnolence and extended episodes of sleep lasting around eight days, the diagnosis has been further complicated by the presence of mild obstructive sleep apnea. This co-existing condition, where breathing gets repeatedly interrupted during sleep, may play a role in exacerbating KLS symptoms.

Notably, a study from North India has reported two cases exhibiting the dual presence of Kleine-Levin Syndrome and sleep apnea, and intriguingly, treating the sleep apnea in a similar case led to marked improvements in the KLS symptoms. The current treatment approach for this patient involves a combination of patient and family counseling and medications aimed at enhancing alertness during episodes, although the treatment doesn't significantly impact concentration. This multi-faceted case underscores the complex interplay of these conditions and the necessity for tailored treatment strategies.

This case highlights the presence of Kleine-Levin Syndrome with periodic hypersomnolence in an adult patient, which is a relatively rare occurrence. The co-existence of sleep apnea and its potential impact on KLS symptoms warrant further exploration. Management focuses on counseling, medications for alertness, and gradual remission of symptoms over a few days. Understanding the unique challenges associated with KLS is crucial for providing effective support and treatment.