

ORIGINAL RESEARCH ARTICLE

Orofacial Injuries in Eclamptic Nigerians

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Abstract

A retrospective review of one hundred and seventy three cases of eclampsia seen between 1994 and 2002 was conducted. Twenty one patients (12.1%) whose ages ranged from 18 to 35 years sustained orofacial injuries during the course of their eclamptic fits. Lacerations and bruises on the tongue, gingivae and lips accounted for injuries in all the patients. Temporomandibular joint dislocation was also recorded in one patient. Tongue lacerations were mainly due to tongue biting. Forceful insertion of objects during convulsive episodes was responsible for the bruises and deep lacerations at the ventral surface of the tongue in two patients. Two patients died from severe and uncontrolled bleeding complicated by renal failure and aspiration pneumonia from lacerations on the tongue and gingivae. Vigorous campaign should be carried out to encourage antenatal care attendance by pregnant mothers so that potential cases of eclampsia could be nipped in the bud before progressing to frank eclampsia. Furthermore, additional injuries usually inflicted on pregnant women by anxious relatives from forceful insertion of unpadded objects as mouth props should be discouraged through public health promotional campaigns. Obstetricians should be aware of the possibility of these injuries in an unconscious eclamptic patient and their life-threatening consequences if not promptly diagnosed and managed. The need to seek appropriate and early dental or maxillofacial consultation where such injuries are suspected and where services are available is imperative. (*Afr J Reprod Health* 2004; 8[3]:147-151)

Keywords: Orofacial injuries, eclampsia, Nigerians

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