

The new EAN/PNS Guideline on the diagnosis and treatment of Guillain-Barré syndrome (GBS)

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Guillain-Barré syndrome (GBS) is an acute polyradiculoneuropathy with symptoms that may vary greatly in presentation, severity and course of disease. Besides weakness and sensory disturbances, patients may have cranial nerve involvement, respiratory insufficiency, autonomic dysfunction and pain. The diagnosis can be difficult, especially in the early phase of disease. Treatment trials have been conducted. A Task Force (TF) of the European Academy of Neurology (EAN) and the Peripheral Nerve Society (PNS) developed an evidence-based guideline (GL) for the diagnosis and treatment of GBS.

We constructed 14 Population/Intervention/Comparison/Outcome questions (PICOs). Using the Grading of Recommendations, Assessment, Development and Evaluation (GRADE) methodology, we made evidence-based recommendations for the six intervention PICOs. For the other PICOs, good practice points (GPPs) were formulated.

For the diagnosis, the GL focusses on the content and relevance of antecedent events, examining cerebrospinal fluid (CSF), antibody testing, electrodiagnosis, and nerve imaging (MRI and ultrasound). In addition, PICOs were made for monitoring for ICU admission, prediction of acute-onset CIDP, and the value of prediction models.

We made recommendations when to start effective treatments (IVIg and plasma exchange). Surprisingly corticosteroids are ineffective in GBS. We discussed and graded the effect of combinations of treatments, and of other potential disease-modifying treatments. Finally, recommendations are given for the treatment of pain and fatigue. The GL contains tables for the diagnostic criteria, and for the differential diagnosis of GBS. Based on the PICOs, the available literature and additional discussions, three practical flow charts are provided to assist making clinical decisions 1) on the diagnosis, 2) when and how to start treatment, and 3) the need for ICU admission. We very much hope that this new evidence based EAN/PNS GBS Guideline that also includes some practical tools, will be helpful in clinical practice.