

MENINGITIS

This 45 year old lady presented today with continuous severe headache, neck stiffness and photophobia that started yesterday evening. She vomited once this morning. She feels generally unwell and feverish. She has no past medical history of note and is usually fit and well. She is allergic to penicillin and does not take any regular medication.

On examination, her temperature was 39.2 °C and she was tachycardic. Her Glasgow coma scale (GCS) score was 15. She had marked meningism and a non-blanching petechial rash on both legs. There were no focal neurological signs, no papilloedema or other signs of raised intracranial pressure and the rest of the general examination was normal. My provisional diagnosis is of meningococcal meningitis.

Lumbar puncture produced cloudy CSF, with a greatly elevated white cell count, low glucose and high protein, consistent with bacterial meningitis. Culture of the CSF and blood culture revealed meningococcus. Intravenous cefotaxime was started immediately, with intravenous fluids and analgesics. The patient's close contacts were given prophylactic ciprofloxacin. She made an uneventful recovery.