

# The First World Report of Botulinum A Toxin Injection for Status Migrainosus

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## Abstract

The author reports the first ever documented publication in the world concerning the use of botulinum toxin A (BTX-A) injection for status migrainosus. A 58-year old man had been suffering from migraine without aura for 20 years. This last attack (a very severe throbbing headache) started over the left side of his head and he had tried several medications (paracetamol, aspirin, ergotamine, mefenamic acid, and diazepam) during the attack to no avail. Physical examination revealed an acutely ill patient with an agonizing pain condition. General and neurological examinations were normal. BTX-A solution was then injected into the Fung Chou point (classical Chinese acupuncture point for migraine) in the total amount of 25 international unit. Dramatic response was observed within 1 hour of injection and status migrainosus was abort within 10 hours. He was headache-free and had no further attack of migraine for another 2 months.

**Key word :** Botulinum A Toxin, Status Migrainosus

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Migraine is a common neurological disorder that affects 11 per cent or more of the adult population<sup>(1)</sup>. The past decade has seen significant advances in our understanding of the epidemiology and underlying mechanisms of migraine<sup>(2)</sup>. Several effective new acute and preventive therapies have

been introduced. Unfortunately, clinical treatment has not kept pace with scientific advances : migraine remains relatively under-recognised, under-diagnosed and under-treated<sup>(3)</sup>.

Migraine is a chronic condition characterised by episodic attacks of headache commonly

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associated with various combinations of nausea, vomiting, photophobia, phonophobia, and aura. Auras are focal neurological, usually visual, symptoms that are reported in approximately 20 per cent of attacks(4).

There are no objective markers or diagnostic tests that define migraine. Therefore, early studies suffered from the drawback that differing definitions of migraine were used. However, the International Headache Society (IHS) guidelines, which were published in 1988(5), have provided a standardised set of diagnostic criteria to use in migraine studies. According to these criteria, migraine without aura is characterised by attacks lasting for 4 to 72 hours. Typical headaches have at least two of the following characteristics : unilateral pain location, pulsating quality, moderate or severe intensity, and aggravation by routine physical activity. In addition, attacks are associated with nausea and with photo- and phonophobia. Migraine with aura is characterised by attacks of neurological symptoms unequivocally localised to the cerebral cortex or brainstem, which usually develop gradually over 5 to 20 minutes and last less than 60 minutes. Headache, nausea, and/or photophobia usually follow neurological aura directly or after a free interval of less than 1 hour.

The term "status migrainosus" is applied to migraine attacks when the headache does not completely disappear but continues unabated or in varying intensity for longer than 3 days(6). The so-called status migrainosus seems in many cases to be due either to the injudicious use of ergotamine tartrate or to an associated tension-type headache. This complication of migraine is an example par excellence of a gap in our knowledge. In the meantime it provides a great challenge for the physician who looks after such a rare case. Antiemetics, sedatives, standard prophylactic drugs, analgesics, tryptans, and steroids provide the main group of drugs used(7). We present here a new option for the successful treatment of status migrainosus with botulinum toxin A injection over the Chinese acupressure point for migraine (Fung Chou point.).

## REPORT OF A CASE

A 58-year old man (HN:42-021347) had been suffering from migraine without aura for 20 years. Each attack usually started at the occipital region and then progressed to the frontal area of the same side. It was frequently accompanied by

nausea and vomiting. The headache was typically throbbing in character and lasted for 4 to 8 hours. Most attacks were aborted by paracetamol or aspirin and diazepam. He occasionally took ergotamine to relieve the very severe headache, which ranged from 2 to 4 attacks per month. He had not been prescribed calcium channel blocker or amitriptyline for migraine prophylaxis.

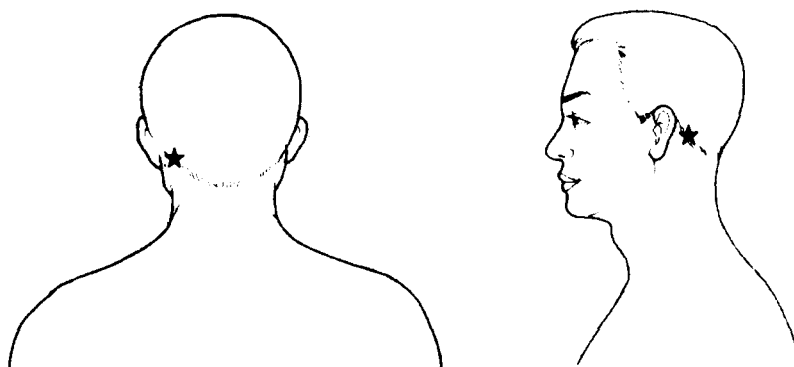
Four days prior to this event, the very severe throbbing headache started over the left side of his head. He took paracetamol, aspirin, ergot (cafergot®), mefenamic acid (Ponstan®), and a sedative drug (diazepam) with no relief. The attack was so severe that he had to be off work for 3 days and finally came to Siriraj Hospital for proper management.

Physical examination revealed an acutely ill patient with an agonizing pain condition. General and neurological examinations were normal. Neither of the temporal arteries were tender. Botulinum A toxin solution was then injected into the left Fung Chou point in the total amount of 25 international units (Fig. 1).

He experienced definite headache relief within 1 hour of injection. Ten hours later the headache was so much improved that he could have a long sleep during that night. The next day he was headache-free and had no further attack of migraine for another 2 months.

## DISCUSSION

Status migrainosus is a very disturbing condition and is defined as the attack of migraine that lasts more than 72 hours whether treated or not. Headache in status migrainosus is continuous throughout the attack or interrupted by headache free intervals lasting less than 4 hours and the interruption during sleep is disregarded. By this definition a patient with status migrainosus suffers from severe headache and needs all sorts of treatment to abort the attack. There are no large series or double-blind treatment trials in status migrainosus, although reports on the treatment of isolated acute migraine include many patients with status migrainosus(8-11). Many subjects respond to one regimen better than another. The choice of treatment modality depends on the preference of the physician, the condition of the patient, and presence or absence of medical contraindication to various agents. They include dihydroergotamine(12), metoclopramide(12), phenothiazine(10,13), corticoste-



**Fig. 1.** Diagrammatic picture showing Fung Chou point for botulinum toxin A injections.

roids<sup>(14)</sup>, nonsteroidal antiinflammatory drugs<sup>(14)</sup>, intravenous lidocaine<sup>(15)</sup>, and sumatriptan<sup>(16-18)</sup>.

Factors that are thought to be responsible for triggering status migrainosus include emotional stress, depression, abuse of medications, anxiety, diet, hormonal factors, and multiple nonspecific factors. Management of these problems were thought to be important in avoiding status migrainosus. Our patient had fulfilled the criteria of status migrainosus and he had tried several medications during the attack to no avail. Botulinum A toxin injection was thus injected into the classical Chinese acupuncture point for migraine headache (i.e. the Fung Chou point). Dramatic response was observed within 1 hour of injection and status migrainosus was aborted within 10 hours.

Botulinum toxin type A (BTX-A) has been used clinically for a number of disorders believed to be due to overactive striated or smooth muscles, such as focal dystonia (e.g. blepharospasm, torticollis, occupational cramp, foot dystonia, etc)<sup>(19-23)</sup>, hemifacial spasm<sup>(24-26)</sup>, spasticity (e.g. post stroke spasticity, post head injury, post-encephalitis, multiple sclerosis, brain or spinal cord tumours, radiation encephalopathy, metabolic and toxic encephalopathies, etc)<sup>(27-30)</sup>, rectal sphincter spasm with fissure<sup>(31)</sup>, urinary dyssynergia, and achalasia<sup>(32)</sup>. Benefits have also been reported for hyperhidrosis<sup>(33)</sup>, hypersalivation, and hand sweat-

ing, showing that BTX-A can inhibit overactive nonmotor as well as motor peripheral acetylcholine neurones. In addition to reducing muscle hyperactivity and spasm, BTX-A treatment often reduces the pain associated with muscle spasm such as cervical dystonia, achalasia and rectal fissures. Preliminary evidence suggests that it can also be beneficial in the treatment of chronic low back pain and cervical pain associated with muscle spasm<sup>(34)</sup>. The booming of BTX-A for cosmetic purposes to reduce facial wrinkles as a cosmetic indication is now widely accepted especially crow feet, frontal furrows and infraorbital wrinkles<sup>(35)</sup>.

Several recent open-label, noncontrolled studies reported that treatment of patients with BTX-A markedly reduced migraine frequency and symptoms<sup>(36,37)</sup>. There are also several studies of BTX-A treatment for tension-type headache both pilot and double-blind, placebo controlled studies which have persistently shown the benefit for treatment and prophylaxis<sup>(38-40)</sup>.

In Thailand, the author has carried out BTX-A injection in an open label study of 21 headache patients which demonstrated the efficacy of this treatment<sup>(41)</sup>. The author believes this report is the first ever documented publication in the world concerning the use of BTX-A injection for status migrainosus.

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## รายงานแรกในโลกที่ฉีดสารโบทูลินัมทอกซิน เอ เพื่อรักษาภาวะ Status Migrainosus

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ผู้วิจัยได้เสนอรายงานการฉีดสารโบทูลินัมทอกซิน เอ เพื่อรักษาภาวะ status migrainosus ในชายไทยอายุ 58 ปี ที่ได้รับการวินิจฉัยว่าเป็นโรคปวดศีรษะไมเกรนมานาน 20 ปี โดยผู้ป่วยมีอาการปวดศีรษะซีกซ้ายแบบตื้อ ๆ ติดต่อกันมานาน 3 วัน ซึ่งยาหลายชนิดที่ผู้ป่วยรับประทานได้แก่ พาราเซตามอล, แอสไพริน, ergotamine, mefenamic acid และ diazepam ไม่สามารถระงับอาการปวดศีรษะได้เลย การตรวจร่างกายผู้ป่วยไม่พบความผิดปกติใด ๆ ในทางระบบประสาทแต่ผู้ป่วยมีอาการปวดศีรษะมากและทรมาน จึงได้รับการฉีดสารโบทูลินัมทอกซิน เอ จำนวน 25 หน่วยสากล ที่บริเวณท้ายทอยด้านซ้าย (ตำแหน่ง Fung Chou ซึ่งเป็นตำแหน่งฝังเข็มรักษาโรคปวดศีรษะไมเกรน ในตำราจีน) อาการปวดศีรษะของผู้ป่วยทุเลาลงอย่างมากภายใน 1 ชั่วโมง และ 10 ชั่วโมงต่อมาหายสนิท ผู้ป่วยไม่ปวดศีรษะอีกเลยในตลอดเวลา 2 เดือนถัดมา ผู้รายงานเชื่อว่ารายนี้เป็น status migrainosus รายงานแรกของโลกที่ได้รับการรักษา ด้วยการฉีดสารโบทูลินัมทอกซิน เอ

**คำสำคัญ :** โบทูลินัมทอกซิน เอ, ภาวะ Status Migrainosus

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