

November 2022 Posterior Stroke

Posterior Stroke

- **Importance:** 160,000 cases/yr of posterior strokes in the US and approximately 20% of ischemic strokes. 8x higher mortality with missed diagnosis
- **Malpractice Risk:** EM physicians are the most likely physicians to be named in stroke lawsuits. (More than FP, IM, neurologists or radiologists).
 - Average payout for plaintiff in jury trial \$9.7 million
 - Average settlement \$1.8 million
 - Increased Malpractice risk related to
 - Not involving neurology (lawsuits including them as a defendant are much less successful and common)
 - Failure to treat with tPA and thrombectomy within a timely manner
 - Lifelong disability of missed strokes increases financial liability
 - [Systematic Review of Malpractice Litigation in the Diagnosis and Treatment of Acute Stroke | Stroke \(ahajournals.org\)](#)
- **Signs and Symptoms**
 - Dizziness, ataxia, dysarthria, nystagmus, headache, nausea/vomiting, unilateral weakness are most common symptoms
 - **20% of posterior strokes have dizziness as the only symptom or sign**
 - Clues to central cause of dizziness- stroke risk factors, abrupt and maximal onset of symptoms, inability to sit or stand without assistance
 - Document ambulatory status
 - Can have many other symptoms: PCA stroke: homonymous hemianopsia, Bilateral PCA: Blindness, visual hallucinations, inability to recognize faces. Basilar: Locked in syndrome
- **Diagnosis**
 - **If concerns for posterior stroke less than 24h of onset, call a code stroke**
 - CT has a very low sensitivity. MRI performed within the first 48h of symptom onset has a sensitivity of 80-90% for posterior circulation strokes
 - The [HINTS exam](#) is more sensitive and specific than MRI in the first 48h for posterior stroke
- **Disposition**
 - Patients with concerning symptoms for posterior stroke and negative CT should receive aspirin, MRI and be admitted.

Stroke Mimics

- Stroke mimics are common, **5% to 31% of patients with focal neurologic deficit.**
- The most common stroke mimics are seizure, migraine, hypoglycemia, and psych disorders
- Other less common stroke mimics- Brain tumor, labyrinthitis, metabolic disorder, migraine, sepsis, syncope, and transient global amnesia
- Stroke mimics receiving tPA are common, 23.7% of stroke tPA doses were given to stroke mimics in this [2022 study](#).

2023 Coding Tip- RVUs come from MDM only starting in 2023- not H&P or time. Consider documenting an interpretation of lab and test results and decision making to admit or discharge. Both of these are components of a level 5 chart

[2023 Documentation Guideline Changes for ED E/M Codes 99281-99285 - ACEP Now](#)