

Brain tumor revealed by treatment-resistant depression

December 22 2015

A woman who was thought to have treatment-resistant depression was later found to have a tumour in her brain, according to an article published in *BMJ Case Reports*.

The 54-year-old woman had been depressed for 6 months, but treatment with the antidepressant fluoxetine and the anti-anxiety medication bromazepam was discontinued after 5 months because these were not found to be effective.

Her symptoms included apathy, difficulties with making decisions and initiating action, a lack of energy, sleep disorders, and concentration and attention problems.

She had suicidal thoughts, admitted self-accusation due to ineffectiveness in her job, and lost interest in her usual pastimes. She did not have a history of personal or familial mental illness, but experienced several [stressful events](#).

A neurological examination was normal. However, a [brain](#) CT scan and MRI revealed meningiomas with a giant meningioma—the most common primary benign brain tumour—in her left frontal lobe.

This is an area known to have an important role in the development of depression for [patients](#) with tumours in the brain.

The patient underwent emergency surgery, and made a recovery. The

[depressive symptoms](#) disappeared within one month.

Psychiatric symptoms such as depression, mania, hallucinations, anxiety disorders and anorexia nervosa, even without any neurological signs, may be a sign of a brain tumour, write the doctors who treated the patient.

They say that certain patients should have a brain scan to identify or exclude the possibility of a tumour, but note that "it seems unrealistic to prescribe brain imaging in every patient with a depressive syndrome" because this mental disorder is common while [brain tumours](#) are "remarkably rare" in patients with depression.

They recommend that it should be performed if the patient presents a late onset of depressive syndrome after 50 years of age, if a diagnosis of treatment-resistant depression is made or if the patient is apathetic.

More information: Meningiomas revealed by a major depressive syndrome, *BMJ Case Reports*,
casereports.bmj.com/content/2015/bcr-2015-211909

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