Ramsay Hunt Syndrome Type 1

Ramsay Hunt syndrome type 1 is also known as herpes zoster oticus. It is a common complication of shingles. Shingles is an infection caused by the varicella-zoster virus. This is the virus that causes chickenpox. Shingles occurs in people who have had chickenpox. Shingles represents a reactivation of the inactive (*dormant*) varicella-zoster virus. Ramsay Hunt syndrome type 1 is caused by the spread of the varicella-zoster virus to facial and auditory (in the ear) nerves.

SYMPTOMS

Symptoms include:

- Intense ear pain.
- Rash around the ear, mouth, face, neck, and scalp.
- Paralysis of facial nerves.

Other symptoms may include:

- Hearing loss.
- Abnormal sensation of movement/balance (*vertigo*).
- Abnormal sounds in the ear (*tinnitus*).
- Taste loss in the tongue.
- Dry mouth and eyes.
- Nausea and vomiting.
- Abnormal eye movements (*nystagmus*).

TREATMENT

Some cases of Ramsay Hunt syndrome type 1 do not require treatment. Most cases may require prompt treatment using oral or intravenous antiviral therapy. Corticosteroids may also be prescribed. Vertigo may be treated with the drug diazepam. It is important to seek medical care as soon as symptoms occur.

Generally, the prognosis of Ramsay Hunt syndrome type 1 is good. But, in some cases, hearing loss may be permanent. Vertigo may last for days or weeks. Facial paralysis may be temporary or permanent.

Research is continually being done to learn more about this problem.

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