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Systematic approach to diagnosis and treatment of pediatric dystonia

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Dystonia is a hyperkinetic movement disorder characterized by sustained or intermittent muscle contraction causing abnormal, often repetitive movements, postures or both. According to the most recent classification dystonia is classified on the basis of clinical characteristics and etiology. Dystonia is one of the most common pediatric movement disorders with heterogeneous etiological spectrum, including acquired, metabolic genetic and heredodegenerative diseases. Few conditions are potentially treatable so precise diagnosis is mandatory. Pediatric dystonia are usually severe disorders with progressive course, frequent generalization and marked motor impairment. Treatment remains unsatisfactory and still mainly based upon oral pharmacological agents. However, neuro modulation is now extensively applied with good to excellent results especially in the group of isolated genetic dystonia. The clinical approach to the pediatric dystonia is presented, from the phenomenology of the movement disorder to the delineation of a rationale diagnostic and therapeutic process.

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