Axial myopathy and parkinsonism

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We report 2 patients with parkinsonism exhibiting pronounced forward flexion of the trunk, called camptocormia or bent spine syndrome. Age of the patients was 70 and 76 years, disease duration 6 and 12 years, respectively. One patient was diagnosed with multiple system atrophy. His parkinsonism responded poorly to dopaminergic treatment. After a two-year course posture deteriorated severely, associated by impaired postural reflexes and slight autonomic failure. The second patient was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease and responded favourably to dopaminergic treatment. She also developed severe forward flexion of the trunk after a six-year course. Temporarily, she suffered from abdominal dystonia which could be controlled with apomorphine infusion treatment.

The common feature, characterising the main functional deficit in both patients, was the inability to actively erect the trunk while passive extension of the trunk was possible. Electromyography of paraspinal muscles revealed a myopathic pattern with high frequency, spiky motor unit potentials of short duration and abnormal spontaneous activity consisting of fibrillations and positive sharp waves. The nature of the observed association between parkinsonism and chronic myopathy confined to trunk extensor muscles is unclear. Focal myopathy may reflect one factor beside others causing abnormal posture in parkinsonism.

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