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The invisible enemy

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Background & Aim: The incidence of stroke in younger age groups is not uncommon. Its etiology is vast and diverse requiring a thorough diagnostic investigation, and includes extracranial arterial dissection, thromboembolic heart disease, premature atherosclerosis, migraine, hematological or immunological disorders and drug abuse. The increase in risk for stroke with the intake of oral contraceptives is a subject of controversy; recent studies suggest that, in general, this risk is not substantially increased and the cause of the stroke should not be attributed to these drugs until other causes are eliminated. The aim of this clinical case is to raise awareness to the risks of stroke in young patients and the importance of their follow-up.

Method: We present the case of a 17 year-old female with no relevant past history and a family history of cardiovascular disease. She's medicated with a combined oral contraceptive pill (since three months before), montelukast and desloratadine. On April 6th she presents with sudden right faciobrachial paresis and hypoesthesia, nominal aphasia and difficulty concentrating.

Results: A brain CT scan confirmed the diagnostic hypothesis of an ischemic stroke. A transesophageal echocardiogram was later performed: initially normal, upon confirmation a patent foramen ovale was revealed. She recovered without sequels, awaits the results of thrombophilia studies and is under antiplatelet therapy. She's currently being evaluated by a Neuropediatrician and also by a Gynecologist.

Conclusion: Stroke in the young is potentially tragic due to its eventual long term consequences. The Family Doctor plays an important role monitoring their patients' health status and articulating with Secondary Health Care consultations. While the follow-up is strictly carried out, a clear etiology sought and the therapeutic compliance supervised in order to avoid future nefarious consequences, the Family Doctor acts as the patients' watchful guide throughout this process assuring the continuity of care.