

DEFINITION

1. **Diabetes insipidus** is an uncommon disorder which is characterised by the persistent excretion of excessive quantities of dilute urine and by constant thirst.

CLINICAL FEATURES

2. The patient presents with excessive thirst and the passage of large quantities of urine.

CLASSIFICATION

3. Diabetes insipidus is divided into -
 - 3.1. **Pituitary diabetes insipidus**, which results from deficient production of antidiuretic hormone and arginine vasopressin.
 - 3.2. **Nephrogenic diabetes insipidus**, which results from failure of response of the renal tubules to vasopressin.

AETIOLOGY

Cranial diabetes insipidus

4. In some 30-40% of cases, a cause cannot be identified, the condition then being said to be **idiopathic**.
 - 4.1. The causes which are known are -
 - 4.2. **genetic defect**
 - 4.3. **trauma**, either accidental or due to hypophysectomy. This is the major identifiable cause.
 - 4.3.1. **intracranial tumour**, which may be
 - 4.3.2. primary, as in craniopharyngioma
 - 4.4. secondary, as with metastases, breast cancer being the most common primary source.
 5. less common causes are **basal meningo-encephalitis**, granulomatous lesions such as **tuberculosis** and **sarcoidosis**, the **histiocytoses** and **vascular lesions**.

Nephrogenic diabetes insipidus

6. This may be due to -
 - 6.1. **genetic defect**
 - 6.2. **metabolic abnormality**, as in hypokalaemia and hypercalcaemia
 - 6.3. **drug therapy**, as with lithium and demethylchlortetracycline
 - 6.4. **poisoning**, as with heavy metals.

CONCLUSION

7. **Diabetes insipidus** is a condition affecting the excretion of water from the body. It may result from cranial or renal causes, these having been listed above.

REFERENCES

Andreoli T E. The Posterior Pituitary - Diabetes Insipidus. In: Wyngaarden J B, Smith L H and Bennett J C (Eds). Cecil Textbook of Medicine. Philadelphia. W B Saunders Company. 19th Ed. 1992. p1242.

Edwards C R W, Baird J D. Endocrine and metabolic diseases - Diabetes Insipidus. In: (Eds) Edwards Christopher R W, Bouchier Ian A D. Davidson's Principles and Practice of Medicine. 16th Ed. 1991. Edinburgh. Churchill Livingstone. p621-622.

December 1992