



Ramsay Hunt Syndrome

Why in News?

Recently, Pop singer Justin Bieber has been diagnosed with Ramsay Hunt Syndrome.

What is Ramsay Hunt Syndrome?

▪ About:

- Ramsay Hunt Syndrome, also known as **Herpes Zoster Oticus**, is a **virus infection of the geniculate ganglion (7th cranial nerve) of the facial nerve** that occurs when a shingles infection affects the facial nerve.
- When **the nerves get inflamed, they lose their ability to function**, leading to **temporary facial palsy or paralysis**.
 - There are **12 cranial nerves in the body**. Ramsay Hunt Syndrome is the viral infection **impacting the 7th cranial nerve** that is involved in facial movements.
- Only about five to 10 out of every 1,00,000 people will develop Ramsay Hunt Syndrome every year, making it **an extremely rare disorder**.

▪ Causes:

- Ramsay Hunt Syndrome is **caused by reactivation of varicella zoster virus** that has previously caused chickenpox and shingles in the patient.
- This virus belongs to the **herpesvirus group** and can stay in the body as a latent infection.
- **Varicella Zoster Virus** can get reactivated due to weakening of the immune system.
- The disease is **not contagious** but can lead to chickenpox in those not vaccinated for the disease.

▪ Symptoms:

- It begins with a **reddish patch** which may inflame into a persistent rash. Sometimes the rash gets into the eardrum, ear canal, ear lobe, tongue, and roof of the mouth on the side with the affected nerve.

▪ Treatment:

- **Antiviral therapies** and **corticosteroids** (anti-inflammatory drug) are commonly used to treat the condition.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question

Q. Consider the following statements:

1. Adenoviruses have single-stranded DNA genomes whereas retroviruses have double-stranded DNA genomes.
2. Common cold is sometimes caused by an adenovirus whereas AIDS is caused by a retrovirus.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Ans: (b)

Exp:

- Viruses are infectious particles that have the ability to infect both eukaryotic and prokaryotic hosts. They are host specific and mostly pathogenic, and thus considered as the common causative agents of many diseases. Viruses that infect human hosts can be categorized as adenoviruses and retroviruses.
- Adenovirus is a type of virus that has no envelope whereas retroviruses are characterized as enveloped viruses. Adenoviruses have double-stranded linear DNA and are associated with two major core proteins. A retrovirus is a virus that uses RNA as its genetic material. When a retrovirus infects a cell, it makes a DNA copy of its genome that is inserted into the DNA of the host cell. Hence, statement 1 is not correct.
- Adenoviruses are common viruses that cause a range of illnesses. They can cause cold-like symptoms, fever, sore throat, bronchitis, pneumonia, diarrhea, and pink eye (conjunctivitis). Whereas, retroviruses can cause several human diseases such as some forms of cancer and AIDS. Hence, statement 2 is correct. Therefore, option (b) is the correct answer.

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