

Hemilaryngopharyngeal spasm

Christopher R. Honey et al., from the University of [British Columbia](#), [Vancouver](#), [Canada](#) described a condition, [hemilaryngopharyngeal spasm](#) (HELPS), which can cause severe episodic [stridor](#) leading to [unconsciousness](#) in association with [cough](#). The first recognized and surgically cured [patient](#) with HELPS was reported in [2017](#) ¹⁾.

Three additional patients have been followed up for at least a year postoperatively.

Each patient presented with a similar pattern of [episodic](#) coughing and [choking](#) that increased in frequency, severity, and duration over years. The episodes eventually occurred while sleeping and could cause severe stridor with loss of [consciousness](#). All three patients were initially misdiagnosed with a [psychiatric](#) illness and subjected to multiple [intubations](#) and one [tracheostomy](#). Unilateral [botulinum toxin](#) injections in the vocal fold eased the severity of the throat contractions but not the cough. [Magnetic resonance imaging](#) showed a looping [posterior inferior cerebellar artery](#) juxtaposed to a [vagus nerve](#) in each case. [Microvascular decompression](#) (MVD) of that vessel relieved all symptoms. The introduction of this new medical condition may help a small cohort of patients with inducible [laryngeal obstructions](#) that have not responded to the current standard treatments. Patients are asymptomatic between episodes of progressively severe coughing and choking with stridor that may lead to intubation. Severe [anxiety](#) about the unpredictable symptoms is expected and may contribute to a psychiatric misdiagnosis. [Microvascular decompression](#) for HELPS is more difficult than that for [trigeminal neuralgia](#) because the involved nerve is more susceptible to manipulation. Ultimately, the final proof that HELPS is a real and distinct syndrome will require its recognition and successful treatment by colleagues around the world ²⁾.

¹⁾

Honey CR, Gooderham, P, Morrison, M, Ivanishvili, Z: Episodic hemilaryngopharyngeal spasm (HELPS) syndrome: case report of a surgically treatable novel neuropathy. J Neurosurg 126:1653-1656, 2017

²⁾

Honey CR, Morrison MD, Heran MKS, Dhaliwal BS. Hemi-laryngopharyngeal spasm as a novel cause of inducible laryngeal obstruction with a surgical cure: report of 3 cases. J Neurosurg. 2018 Jul 20:1-5. doi: 10.3171/2018.2.JNS172952. [Epub ahead of print] PubMed PMID: 30028264.

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