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The relationship between head and eye movement in congenital nystagmus with headshaking: objective recordings of a single case.

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Abstract

Head shaking and congenital nystagmus were recorded in a patient presented with visual tasks. When she was at rest the nystagmus took a 6 cycles per second saw-tooth wave-form. When she was attentive the nystagmus beat at a 2 to 2.6 cycles per second with a saddle-shaped deformation which permitted foveation. The head shaking occurred occasionally when the patient was attentive and was phase-locked to the nystagmus with resemblances in wave form and direction. Deceleration of the head shaking to zero velocity and peak displacement (to the left) coincided with the onset of the saddle of the nystagmus and hence assisted foveation; all other parts of the head-shaking cycle were detrimental to vision. It is proposed that the headshaking has a common pathological origin with the nystagmus and that, just as an isolated congenital nystagmus wave form becomes altered with attention to permit periods of foveal fixation, the pattern of combined head and eye nodding in this patient provided similar periods of fixation.