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[Clinical aspects of brain death]

[Article in German]

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Abstract

The cause of brain death must be known irreversible primary or secondary structural damage of brain and brain stem. The clinical signs and symptoms of the irreversible cessation of brain functions enable to diagnose brain death. An EEG at maximal gain reflects absence of cerebral electrical activity. The presence of an isoelectric EEG is a mandatory requirement for the diagnosis of brain death. Angiographic, sonographic or other methods to assure cessation of cerebral blood flow but also other methods as the apnea test etc. are helpful but seem to be not necessary. Nearly in every case typical signs and symptoms of an acute midbrain- and bulbar brain syndrome can be diagnosed in the pre-stage of brain death. In about 60% medullary-initiated movements and spinal reflexes can appear and persist for prolonged periods in brain dead patients.