

A 54-year-old woman with facial weakness and trismus

Teaching Video *NeuroImages*

Neurology

Resident & Fellow Section

Vignette

- A 54-year-old Brazilian woman with unknown immunization status presented with unilateral facial weakness and trismus one week after facial trauma.
- Examination revealed left frontal laceration, left upper and lower facial weakness, and trismus (**figure, video**).
- CT of the head and face were unremarkable.

Image & video



Cephalic tetanus – not every facial weakness is Bell's palsy

- She was diagnosed with cephalic tetanus and treated with tetanus immune globulin and active vaccination, metronidazole, and supportive care. The wound was debrided and two wooden foreign bodies were collected.
- Cephalic tetanus accounts for one to three percent of all tetanus cases. These patients typically present with trismus and cranial nerve dysfunction – generally the seventh, but also the third, fourth, sixth, and/or twelfth – following injury to the ipsilateral face ^{1,2}.
- Despite its rarity, cephalic tetanus should always be considered in patients presenting with trismus and facial weakness following trauma, especially in developing countries and in the elderly.