Introduction: Transient global amnesia (TGA) is an uncommon and poorly understood syndrome that results in sudden, self-limiting anterograde amnesia, sometimes with a retrograde component.

Case: A 48-year-old woman with no significant past medical history presented to the Emergency department with altered mental status for 1 day. Her family reported she had new issues with short term memory. The patient was still able to recall old memories and was able to recognize family members. They denied any witnessed seizure-like activity, weakness, facial droop, bowel or bladder incontinence. On physical exam, her vitals were normal. The patient was alert and oriented to person and place, but not time or situation. Her neurological exam was normal apart from the MMSE in which she was unable to recall 3 items after 5 minutes. Labs were overall unremarkable. In the ED, the patient was stroke activated. Her NIHSS scale was 0; tPA was not given due to suspected cause other than acute ischemic stroke. MRI showed a 0.5 cm acute lacunar infarct in the posterior left hippocampal formation. The patient’s symptoms resolved spontaneously over the next 24 hours. Transient global amnesia was suspected clinically.

Discussion: Transient Global Amnesia occurs primarily in older adults between the ages of 50 and 80 years without discrimination of sex. During the affected time, patients can recognize self and family members but are unable to form new memories for the extent of the syndrome.

Diagnostic criteria for TGA include: 1) The episode must be witnessed. 2) Anterograde amnesia must be present during the episode. 3) There should be no clouding of consciousness or loss of identity and cognitive impairment is limited to amnesia. 4) There should be no focal neurological symptoms during or after the episode. 5) There should be no features of epilepsy. 6) The episode must resolve in 24 hours. 7) The patient cannot have a recent head injury or active epilepsy. TGA is self-limiting - typically lasting 4 to 6 hours but can last up to 24 hours in some cases.