Table 2

Red flags suggesting an alternative cause requiring urgent referral [20]

History red flags

- Insidious onset (weeks/months)
- Prolonged evolution of symptoms/lack of improvement/relapses
- Recurrence within weeks/months
- Audiovestibular (vestibulocochlear nerve) symptoms; hearing loss, tinnitus, vertigo
- Systemic symptoms (infective/immune) e.g. rash, fever, weight loss
- History of malignancy, stroke or trauma
- HIV risk factors
- Lyme disease risk factors (exposure in endemic area and symptoms/signs)

Examination red flags

- Any other cranial nerve deficits
- Any new or altered preexisting neurological signs
- Abnormal systemic examination findings; potentially malignant skin lesions, vesicular rashes, parotid gland masses