Table 1

Differential diagnosis

Bell's palsy	One-sided facial weakness also occurs in Bell's palsy. However, the characteristic feature of Ramsay Hunt syndrome remains the presence of the typical erythematous vesicular rash. The facial palsy associated with Ramsay Hunt syndrome tends to be more severe and the prognosis less favourable.[4]
Otitis externa	Early presentation in Ramsay Hunt syndrome can be mistaken for otitis externa, as happened in this case. The natural disease progression and onset of the rash remains a key differentiating factor, as does the development of facial palsy. [6]
Referred pain	This can be from a variety of sources including the temporomandibular joint, teeth, ear and nasopharynx.
Herpes simplex virus (HSV) infection	The rash may be morphologically similar, however there is no associated facial palsy. HSV infections have a tendency to recur whereas only 4% of patients will experience a second episode of shingles, and third episodes are even rarer.[7]
Atypical headaches	Trigeminal neuralgia, cluster headaches and occasionally temporal arteritis may have a similar presentation.
Acute vestibular neuronitis and Ménières disease	Both these conditions can present with symptoms similar to those associated with Ramsay Hunt syndrome.