LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Postictal psychosis related regional cerebral hyperperfusion

Postictal psychosis is a known complication of complex partial seizure in particular temporal lobe epilepsy. It usually runs a benign and self limiting course. A postictal phenomenon with focal cerebral hypofunction (similar to Todd’s palsy), rather than ongoing seizure activity, has been postulated. Surface EEG is either normal or showing non-specific slow waves. Hence, antipsychotic medications are prescribed instead of antiepileptic drugs. Until recently, the pathogenic mechanisms have remained unknown. In this communication, we report on two patients with postictal psychosis, during which a cerebral SPECT study showed a hyperperfusion signal over the right temporal lobe and contralateral basal ganglion. As hyperperfusion in ictal cerebral SPECT is closely linked to epileptic activities, our findings support a contrary explanation for postictal psychosis.

Prolonged video-EEG telemetry study was performed in patients who underwent presurgical evaluation for epilepsy surgery. Antiepileptic drugs were withdrawn to facilitate seizure recording. A diagnosis of temporal lobe epilepsy was based on analysis of the electroclinical events and, if applicable, postoperative outcome after anterior temporal lobectomy. Psychosis was diagnosed according to the fourth edition of the diagnostics and statistical manual of mental disorders (DSM-IV) criteria of brief psychotic disorders without marked stressor. HMPAO-SPECT was performed during the psychotic period, which ranged from 2–4 days after the last seizure. Interictal cerebral SPECT, brain MRI, and a Wada test were performed as part of presurgical evaluation.

Patient 1 was a 34 year old Chinese woman with complex partial seizures since the age of 18. Her seizure control was suboptimal on a combination of antiepileptic drugs. Brain MRI showed a small hippocampus on the right. Interictal EEG showed bilateral temporal sharp waves and ictal recordings confirmed a right temporal epileptogenic focus. A Wada test confirmed right hippocampal memory dysfunction. Six hours after her last secondary generalised tonic-clonic seizure after video-EEG telemetry, she began to develop emotional lability, talking nonsense, motor restlessness, and auditory hallucination. A cerebral SPECT study was performed at day 4 after her last seizure. Her psychotic features persisted although she was taking antipsychotic medication (pimozide). Cerebral SPECT showed a clear hyperperfusion signal over the right lateral temporal neocortex and contralateral basal ganglion. An interictal cerebral SPECT study was repeated at 4 weeks after postictal psychosis which showed a complete resolution of hyperfusion signal in the right temporal lobe and basal ganglia. Anterior temporal lobectomy was performed and she became seizure free after surgery.

Patient 2 was a 44 year old man with intractable complex partial seizures since the age of 30. His seizures were intractable to multiple antiepileptic drugs. Brain MRI showed left hippocampal sclerosis. Interictal cerebral SPECT showed a relative hyperfusion area over the left hemisphere. Interictal surface EEG was non-lateralising but ictal EEG disclosed a right hemispheric onset. On withdrawal of antiepileptic drugs, seven complex partial seizures with secondary generalised tonic clonic seizures were recorded within a period of 72 hours. His usual antiepileptic drugs were then restarted. Thirty hours after his last secondary generalised tonic-clonic seizure, he began to develop emotional lability, talking nonsense, restlessness, auditory hallucination, persecutory delusion, and delusion of superstition. Cerebral SPECT study, performed 2 days later while his psychotic features persisted, showed two relative hyperperfused areas over the right temporal neocortex and contralateral basal ganglion in addition to the original hyperperfused area over the left hemisphere. An antipsychotic agent (thioridazine) was
started after the cerebral SPECT. His psychotic symptoms resolved 2 weeks later with full recovery.

Cerebral SPECT performed during the interictal period (IP) and during postictal psychosis (PP) were analysed visually and area of hyperperfusion areas were identified. Quantitative data at interests of ROIs were measured on coronal and axial slices containing basal ganglia (BG), mesial (MT), and lateral temporal lobe structures. Asymmetry index (ASI) was calculated as (ROI focus−ROI contralateral)/ROI focus×100. We set an arbitrary change of ASI >100% to be significant. As there were only two patients, statistical testing was not performed.

Both patients showed postictal psychosis and had a regional increase in rCBF over the right temporal neocortex and the left basal ganglia compared to their interictal study (figure). Quantitative analysis for patient 1 showed changes of ASI during IP and PP over right MT was 3.8% (+0.263 to 6.528); over the right LT was +11.6% (1.079 to 12.5;674); and over the left BG was +20.8% (+2.07373 to 2.21574). Quantitative analysis for patient 2 showed changes of ASI during IP and PP over right MT was +8.3% (13.14217 to 12.64158); over right LT was +178.6% (10.4666 to 18.7057); and over left BG was +155.9% (+5.85556 to 3.27522).

Postictal psychosis is a distinct clinical event associated with temporal lobe epilepsy.

The diagnosis of postictal psychosis requires a close temporal relation between bouts of complex partial seizures and the onset of psychosis. The psychosis usually develops after a clinical seizure and partial seizures were usually precipitated by abrupt withdrawal of antiepileptic drugs.

The cluster occurs in patients with poor drug compliance or during video EEG telemetry studies when antiepileptic drugs are stopped predictably. The clinical course of postictal psychosis is usually benign and predictable.

In our patients, the duration of psychic disturbances lasted from 10 to 11 days, which is in keeping with the good prognosis. Antipsychotic drugs, such as haloperidol and fluphenazine are usually prescribed.

The underlying mechanism of postictal psychosis is unknown. Postictal cerebral hypofunction has been postulated as an analogue to Todd's paralysis after seizure.

However, the presence of increased rCBF during postictal psychosis, may suggest an alternative explanation as ictal SPECT has been shown to be highly sensitive and specific in demonstrating seizure foci.

To conclude, our results are contradictory to the hypothesis of ongoing angiogenesis.

Cerebral arteriovenous malformations (AVMs) are thought to be congential malformations exhibiting features of either mature vascular walls or embryonal anastomotic plexuses. It is generally assumed that changes in size are dependent on enlargement of the venous compartment, organisation in the setting of microhaemorrhages, and gliosis. However, recent findings are consistent with the hypothesis of ongoing angiogenesis.

Cerebral arteriovenous malformations and neighbouring vessels

Cerebral arteriovenous malformations (AVMs) are thought to be congenital malformations exhibiting features of either mature vascular walls or embryonal anastomotic plexuses. It is generally assumed that changes in size are dependent on enlargement of the venous compartment, organisation in the setting of microhaemorrhages, and gliosis. However, recent findings are consistent with the hypothesis of ongoing angiogenesis.

Cerebral arteriovenous malformations (AHs) are a blend of structurally different glycoproteins that result from alternative splicing of the primary transcript and are mainly expressed in the extracellular matrix. Their expression is undetectable in normal adult tissues, with the exception of the vessels in the regenerating endometrium. To gain further insight into the pathobiology of the AVMs the present report sought to ascertain whether these lesions also express oncofetal FN and TN isoforms.

The diagnosis of postictal psychosis requires a close temporal relation between bouts of complex partial seizures and the onset of psychosis. The psychosis usually develops after a clinical seizure and partial seizures were usually precipitated by abrupt withdrawal of antiepileptic drugs.

The cluster occurs in patients with poor drug compliance or during video EEG telemetry studies when antiepileptic drugs are stopped predictably. The clinical course of postictal psychosis is usually benign and predictable.

In our patients, the duration of psychic disturbances lasted from 10 to 11 days, which is in keeping with the good prognosis. Antipsychotic drugs, such as haloperidol and fluphenazine are usually prescribed.

The underlying mechanism of postictal psychosis is unknown. Postictal cerebral hypofunction has been postulated as an analogue to Todd's paralysis after seizure.

However, the presence of increased rCBF during postictal psychosis, may suggest an alternative explanation as ictal SPECT has been shown to be highly sensitive and specific in demonstrating seizure foci.

To conclude, our results are contradictory to the hypothesis of ongoing angiogenesis.

Cerebral arteriovenous malformations (AVMs) are thought to be congenital malformations exhibiting features of either mature vascular walls or embryonal anastomotic plexuses. It is generally assumed that changes in size are dependent on enlargement of the venous compartment, organisation in the setting of microhaemorrhages, and gliosis. However, recent findings are consistent with the hypothesis of ongoing angiogenesis.

Cerebral arteriovenous malformations and neighbouring vessels

Cerebral arteriovenous malformations (AVMs) are thought to be congenital malformations exhibiting features of either mature vascular walls or embryonal anastomotic plexuses. It is generally assumed that changes in size are dependent on enlargement of the venous compartment, organisation in the setting of microhaemorrhages, and gliosis. However, recent findings are consistent with the hypothesis of ongoing angiogenesis.

Cerebral arteriovenous malformations (AVMs) are thought to be congenital malformations exhibiting features of either mature vascular walls or embryonal anastomotic plexuses. It is generally assumed that changes in size are dependent on enlargement of the venous compartment, organisation in the setting of microhaemorrhages, and gliosis. However, recent findings are consistent with the hypothesis of ongoing angiogenesis.
Previous findings showed that ED-B+FN presents with conformational modifications in its central part and results from deregulation of FN pre-mRNA. The distribution of this isofrom was found to be highly restricted in normal adult tissues. By contrast, ED-B+ FN exhibited widespread distribution in the vasculature of fetal tissues, including brain, and of several types of malignancies. It was therefore regarded as a marker of angiogenesis.

Similarly, the type III repeat C TN isofrom, recognised by the Ab fragment TN-11, was found to occur in the vascular walls of anaplastic gliomas. Northern blot analysis showed that the mRNA of this isoform was undetectable in normal tissues and some malignancies, but was present in large amounts in fetal tissues, including brain, and in glioblastomas.

Recent advances in the pathology of cerebral AVMs suggest that these lesions might not be static. Tyrosine kinase, an endothelial cell specific receptor upregulated in glioblastomas, was found to be highly expressed in both AVMs and in the vessels of cerebral tissue bordering the malformations, by contrast with the down regulation occurring in the vasculature of the normal brain. The pattern of distribution of structural proteins was consistent with the hypothesis of diffuse activation of angiogenesis, without specific relation to individual vessel types.

Furthermore, use of the cell proliferation marker MB-1 showed endothelial proliferation in arterioles, venules, and capillaries of the cerebral tissue neighbouring AVMs.

The present findings indicate that a particular FN isofrom, mainly expressed by the vasculature of fetal and tumorous tissues, as well as a TN isofrom typically detected in the walls of vessels in anaplastic gliomas, also occur in AVMs and in vessels of adjacent cerebral tissue, but that both isofroms are absent in normal brain. This evidence provides further support to the hypothesis of ongoing angiogenesis in and around these lesions.

The presence of angiogenic features in AVMs might result from maintenance of proliferating and remodelling potentials, or from a specific response to haemodynamic stress in vascular structures subjected to increased blood flow and pressure. Occurrence of these features also in vessels lying in areas peripheral to the nidus might be related to recruitment of the neighbouring vasculature, possibly dependent on focal ischaemia in the setting of arteriovenous shunting. However, the presence in apparently normal vasculature of molecules typically occurring in fetal tissues and malignancies indicate that cerebral AVMs may not be static lesions. Further studies are needed to ascertain whether this phenomenon results merely from haemodynamic stress or actually reflects an intrinsic growth potential. Should this second be the case, current therapeutic strategies would possibly require revision.

This study was partially supported by the National Research Council (CNR), AIRC and the Ministry of University and Scientific Research (MURST). We thank Sergio Deseri, EE, for his technical help and Mr. Thomas Wiley for manuscript revision.

Hashimoto's encephalopathy presenting as "myxoedematous madness"

The neuropsychiatric sequelae of hypothyroidism range from lethargy and mental slowing to the florid psychotic illness referred to as "myxoedematous madness". The last condition is characterised by frank hypothyroidism accompanied by psychosis, and may respond completely to thyroxine. More recently described is a syndrome of subacute encephalopathy, associated with high titres of thyroid autoantibodies, raised CSF protein, EEG abnormalities, and perfusion deficits in the presence of normal structural neuro-imaging. In most cases, the encephalopathy occurs without any gross change in circulating concentrations of thyroid hormones, suggesting that an inflammatory process is responsible for the cerebral dysfunction. In the absence of pathological data, the evidence for a specific pathogenetic mechanism is largely circumstantial: a small vessel vasculitis and immune complex deposition have both been suggested.

Although none of the published cases of Hashimoto's encephalopathy has described psychosis as a primary feature, it is possible that "myxoedematous madness", a condition first described in detail by Asher in 1949 lies in a range of encephalopathic phenomena mediated by autoimmunisation. The suggestion would certainly be consistent with the range of clinical presentations of other autoimmune cerebral vasculitides. As autoimmune thyroiditis is the commonest cause of thyroid failure in this country, Hashimoto's encephalopathy has described psychosis as a primary feature, it is possible that "myxoedematous madness", a condition first described in detail by Asher in 1949 lies in a range of encephalopathic phenomena mediated by autoimmunisation. The suggestion would certainly be consistent with the range of clinical presentations of other autoimmune cerebral vasculitides. As autoimmune thyroiditis is the commonest cause of thyroid failure in this country, Hashimoto's encephalopathy has described psychosis as a primary feature, it is possible that "myxoedematous madness", a condition first described in detail by Asher in 1949 lies in a range of encephalopathic phenomena mediated by autoimmunisation.


Correspondence to: Dr A Pau

J Neurol Neurosurg Psychiatry 2000;68:100-126.
became aggressive and threatened them with a saw. The general practitioner was called and surmised "he had bought a new psyche and was a severe depressive illness. Police assistance was requested because of the patient's continuing violent behaviour.

On admission he was unsteady but cooperative and apparently gentle. He denied depression, but displayed no insight into the irregularity of his behaviour. No psychotic features were seen, although during the admission he consistently rationalised all reported psychiatric phenomena. He was aggressive towards staff and made repeated attempts to abscond. General physical examination was unremarkable. Neurological examination was normal except for spoken language, which was fluent and grammatical, but contained word finding pauses, circumlocutions, and occasional semantic errors (for example, “I just want to get my feet back on the table”). Formal neuropsychological testing, and a screen of laboratory tests for reversible causes of encephalopathy, were performed on admission, and results are presented below (column A). Attention is drawn to his mild naming deficit, and poor performance on tests of abstract assessment, so he was due to planning rather than visuospatial ability. He did not use at any stage.

On admission he was unkempt but cooperative and had a new psyche and a severe depressive illness. Police assistance was requested because of the patient's continuing violent behaviour.

On admission he was unkempt but cooperative and apparently gentle. He denied depression, but displayed no insight into the irregularity of his behaviour. No psychotic features were seen, although during the admission he consistently rationalised all reported psychiatric phenomena. He was aggressive towards staff and made repeated attempts to abscond. General physical examination was unremarkable. Neurological examination was normal except for spoken language, which was fluent and grammatical, but contained word finding pauses, circumlocutions, and occasional semantic errors (for example, “I just want to get my feet back on the table”). Formal neuropsychological testing, and a screen of laboratory tests for reversible causes of encephalopathy, were performed on admission, and results are presented below (column A). Attention is drawn to his mild naming deficit, and poor performance on tests of abstract assessment, so he was due to planning rather than visuospatial ability. He did not use at any stage.

On admission he was unkempt but cooperative and apparently gentle. He denied depression, but displayed no insight into the irregularity of his behaviour. No psychotic features were seen, although during the admission he consistently rationalised all reported psychiatric phenomena. He was aggressive towards staff and made repeated attempts to abscond. General physical examination was unremarkable. Neurological examination was normal except for spoken language, which was fluent and grammatical, but contained word finding pauses, circumlocutions, and occasional semantic errors (for example, “I just want to get my feet back on the table”). Formal neuropsychological testing, and a screen of laboratory tests for reversible causes of encephalopathy, were performed on admission, and results are presented below (column A). Attention is drawn to his mild naming deficit, and poor performance on tests of abstract assessment, so he was due to planning rather than visuospatial ability. He did not use at any stage.

On admission he was unkempt but cooperative and apparently gentle. He denied depression, but displayed no insight into the irregularity of his behaviour. No psychotic features were seen, although during the admission he consistently rationalised all reported psychiatric phenomena. He was aggressive towards staff and made repeated attempts to abscond. General physical examination was unremarkable. Neurological examination was normal except for spoken language, which was fluent and grammatical, but contained word finding pauses, circumlocutions, and occasional semantic errors (for example, “I just want to get my feet back on the table”). Formal neuropsychological testing, and a screen of laboratory tests for reversible causes of encephalopathy, were performed on admission, and results are presented below (column A). Attention is drawn to his mild naming deficit, and poor performance on tests of abstract assessment, so he was due to planning rather than visuospatial ability. He did not use at any stage.

On admission he was unkempt but cooperative and apparently gentle. He denied depression, but displayed no insight into the irregularity of his behaviour. No psychotic features were seen, although during the admission he consistently rationalised all reported psychiatric phenomena. He was aggressive towards staff and made repeated attempts to abscond. General physical examination was unremarkable. Neurological examination was normal except for spoken language, which was fluent and grammatical, but contained word finding pauses, circumlocutions, and occasional semantic errors (for example, “I just want to get my feet back on the table”). Formal neuropsychological testing, and a screen of laboratory tests for reversible causes of encephalopathy, were performed on admission, and results are presented below (column A). Attention is drawn to his mild naming deficit, and poor performance on tests of abstract assessment, so he was due to planning rather than visuospatial ability. He did not use at any stage.

On admission he was unkempt but cooperative and apparently gentle. He denied depression, but displayed no insight into the irregularity of his behaviour. No psychotic features were seen, although during the admission he consistently rationalised all reported psychiatric phenomena. He was aggressive towards staff and made repeated attempts to abscond. General physical examination was unremarkable. Neurological examination was normal except for spoken language, which was fluent and grammatical, but contained word finding pauses, circumlocutions, and occasional semantic errors (for example, “I just want to get my feet back on the table”). Formal neuropsychological testing, and a screen of laboratory tests for reversible causes of encephalopathy, were performed on admission, and results are presented below (column A). Attention is drawn to his mild naming deficit, and poor performance on tests of abstract assessment, so he was due to planning rather than visuospatial ability. He did not use at any stage.

On admission he was unkempt but cooperative and apparently gentle. He denied depression, but displayed no insight into the irregularity of his behaviour. No psychotic features were seen, although during the admission he consistently rationalised all reported psychiatric phenomena. He was aggressive towards staff and made repeated attempts to abscond. General physical examination was unremarkable. Neurological examination was normal except for spoken language, which was fluent and grammatical, but contained word finding pauses, circumlocutions, and occasional semantic errors (for example, “I just want to get my feet back on the table”). Formal neuropsychological testing, and a screen of laboratory tests for reversible causes of encephalopathy, were performed on admission, and results are presented below (column A). Attention is drawn to his mild naming deficit, and poor performance on tests of abstract assessment, so he was due to planning rather than visuospatial ability. He did not use at any stage.
falling over him.” His wife mentioned bizarre, useless movements of his left hand which were present from the beginning of the disease.

On admission, he was awake, bradyphrenic, and partially collaborative. His conversation, handwriting, and walking were normal. The patient denied that there were involuntary movements of his left hand. When questioned about their purpose, the patient thought that she “was powerless to stop this movement” and when directed to stop responding “I did it”. Another patient’s left arm was at times “elevated in front of him”, while he was “unaware of this situation until his attention was called to it” (patient 1). The patient thought that she “was powerless to stop this movement” and when directed to stop responding “I did it.” Another patient’s left arm was at times “elevated in front of him”, while he was “unaware of this situation until his attention was called to it” (patient 10).

Another related phenomenon coined as “arm levitation” was reported in progressive supranuclear palsy. In these patients the arm involuntarily raised and performed semi-purposeful movements.

One common denominator between CJD, corticalis degeneration, and progressive multifocal leukoencephalopathy, in which an alien hand sign has also been described, is multifocality. In corticalis degeneration, it was reported that more than one site is affected or that a “release” phenomenon occurs accounting for the aetiology of alien hand. In CJD, bilateral cortical damage to motor areas might be the origin of their subsequent isolation and disconnection.

We suggest that CJD should be added to the differential diagnosis of diseases presenting with an alien hand with or without myoclonus.

We are indebted to Professor Eran Zardel, Department of Physiology, University of California, Los Angeles, USA.

R INZELBERG
P NISIPEANU
S C BLUMEN
R L CARASIO
Department of Neurology, Hillel Yaffe Medical Center, Hadera, Israel

Correspondence to: Dr Dr R Inzelberg, Department of Neurology, Hillel Yaffe Medical Center, Hadera, 38100, Israel. Email neurology@hillel-yaffe.health.gov.il


Recurrent peripheral neuropathy in a girl with celiac disease

The involvement of the peripheral nervous system (PNS) in children with celiac disease is particularly rare. Furthermore, in both children and adults with celiac disease, neurological complications are chronic and progressive.

We report on a 12 year old girl affected by celiac disease, who on two separate occasions presented with an acute peripheral neurological syndrome after accidental reintroduction of gluten in her diet.

This patient was born uneventfully to healthy-consanguineous parents with no family history of neurological or metabolic diseases. At the age of 6 months she was diagnosed as having celiac disease according to the European Society of Paediatric Gastroenterology and Nutrition criteria. Since then she was on a strict gluten free diet and was asymptomatic until the age of 10 years when severe diarrhoea, vomiting, and abdominal pain manifested 6 days after the intake of corn flakes considered thought to be gluten free. No previous infections had been noticed. One week after the onset of these symptoms she experienced acute weakness and pins and needles sensation confined to her legs. At that time her parents stopped her intake of corn flakes on the suspicion that these were responsible for the symptoms. Despite this, symptoms worsened during the next 2 days, confining her to bed.

At hospital admission, she was alert and mentally stable. Results of general physical examination were unremarkable. Neurological examination disclosed symmetric, predominantly distal, weakness of the legs; the knee jerks and ankle reflexes were depressed; plantar reflexes were flexor. Distal stocking glove decrease in pin prick and temperature with sparing of proprioception and light touch. Coordination tests were normal.

Laboratory investigations showed a white cell count of 9300/mm³. The results of the following investigations were within the normal limits: haemogram, erythrocyte sedimentation rate, serum urea, nitrogen, electrolytes, creatinine, glucose, transaminase, bilirubin, immunoglobulins (Igs), lead, iron, copper, urinary tract, urine myoglobin, myelin associated glycoprotein and myelin.
basic protein were not tested. Nerve conduc-
tion studies were consistent with a predomi-
nately motor demyelinating peripheral neu-
ropathy (table). Her symptoms improved 
spontaneously and she was discharged home 
after 2 weeks. For 2 years she was asympto-
matic on a gluten free diet.

At the age of 12 she presented acutely with 
severe abdominal pain 8 days after a weekly 
intake of bread meant to be gluten free. Two 
weeks later, due to persisting gastrointestinal 
symptoms, her parents excluded the bread 
from her diet. After 2 further weeks, while the 
abdominal pain was gradually improving, she 
had a new episode of acute weakness in the 
lower limbs and sensory abnormalities in-
cluding burning paraesthesiae. On neurologi-
cal examination the legs showed marked 
depression in muscle power; absent deep 
tendon reflexes, and a reduction in pain and 
temperature; light touch, perception of posi-
tion, and vibration were preserved. Walking 
was impaired and the patient was bedridden. 
Otherwise the examination was normal.

A haemogram showed white cell counts of 
9700/mm$^3$. Laboratory investigations were 
within normal values as in the past. IgA and 
IgG AGA, IgA EMA, and IgA ARA assayed 
by ELISA and IF were again negative. Nerve 
conduction studies confirmed the presence of 
a predominantly motor demyelinating neu-
ropathy (table). The parents refused consent 
for a lumbar puncture or nerve biopsy.

Over the next 2 weeks her neurological dis-
abilities spontaneously improved until full 
recovery was complete. After 4 weeks, AGA, 
EMA, and ARA were still negative.

On her most recent admission, 1 year after 
the onset of her first neurological symptoms, 
she is still on a strict gluten free diet and has 
no residual symptoms or signs.

The natural history of celiac disease is well 
known and the typical celiac enteropathy is 
often associated with several other disorders. 
However, as celiac disease is a relatively 
common and lifelong condition, it is likely that 
some of these associations may occur by 
chance.

This patient, who was diagnosed as having 
frank celiac disease at the age of 6 months, 
experienced two episodes of acute peripheral 
neuropathy, at the age of 10 and 12 years, 
respectively. Two major pieces of evidence 
strongly support the assumption of a gluten 
derived disease: (1) the episodes occurred on 
both occasions when gluten was accidentally 
reintroduced in the diet; and (2) the response 
to a gluten free diet was reasonably rapid, 
occurring within weeks.

The present case, however, differs clinically 
from those with neurological involvement pre-
viously reported. In the paediatric age group, 
in fact, neurological complications of celiac 
disease are rarely encountered and are mostly 
confined to the CNS: to the best of our 
knowledge, there are only two previously 
reported cases of CNS involvement in children 
with celiac disease. In both cases, however, 
these were chronic axonal polyneuropathies 
presenting during a gluten free diet. 1

In both episodes in the present case neu-
physiology was strongly supportive of a 
demyelinating peripheral neuropathy, which 
is most commonly attributed to a direct 
immune mediated attack to the myelin. By 
contrast, wallerian and axonal degeneration 
may be caused by vasculitis, and nutritional, 
metabolic, and toxic factors.

An autoimmune pathogenesis in associ-
ation with strong evidence of a genetic 
susceptibility has been proposed for celi-
cia disease. Although it is well established 
that AGA, EMA, and ARA are reliable indicators 
of sensitisation to gluten at least at the time 
of diagnosis, in the clinical practice at follow up, 
during a gluten challenge, pathological values 
of these antibodies may not be detected. 4

In the present case the time course of the 
disease might be suggestive of an antibody 
mediated response. However, we could not detect 
pathological concentrations of AGA, EMA, 
or ARA antibodies either during the course of 
the disease or at follow up.

It is known that in celiac disease many 
immunological perturbations can occur out-
side the gastrointestinal tract. Crossing of 
the antigens through a damaged small intes-
tinal mucosa, deposition of immune complexes 
in target organs, a reduction in immune surveil-
ance, mechanism of molecular mimicry, and 
activated T cell response may contribute to 
the pathogenesis of the diseases associated 
with celiac disease. Direct toxic effects of 
gludin and vitamin deficiency are other pos-
sible pathogenic mechanisms of damage to 
the nervous system. Although we ruled out 
a vitamin deficiency it is still questionable 
whether a toxic neuropathy can be the case. 

In conclusion this case shows two major 
issues: an acute polyneuropathy can be a 
complication of celiac disease in childhood 
and its benign course could help in the 
understanding of the underlying pathogenic 
mechanisms.

We are grateful to Professor Angela Vincent 
(Oxford) for her helpful suggestions in reviewing the 
manuscript.

AGATA POLIZZI
DIVISION OF PEDIATRIC NEUROLOGY, DEPARTMENT OF PEDIATRICS, UNIVERSITY OF CATANIA
CATANIA, ITALY

MARIA FIOCCCHI
ENZO PARANO
PIER PAOLO

Division of Paediatric Neurology, Department of Paediatrics, University of Catania, Catania, Italy

Correspondence to: Dr Agata Polizzi, Division of Paediatric Neurology, Department of Paediatrics, University of Catania, Viale A Doria 6, 95125
Catania, Italy email: rupo@ctonline.it

1 Cooke WT, Thomas Smith W. Neurological 
disorders associated with adult coeliac disease. 
disease, epilepsy and cerebral calcifications. 
Nervous system involvement in paediatric coe-
lic patients. In: Meanin ML, Mulder CJJ, eds. 
Coeliac disease. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic, 
Coeliac disease associated with peripheral neu-
ropathy in a child: a case report. Neuropediatrics 
1998;29:155–8
antibodies in the various stages of coeliac 
disease in children. Pediatr Med Chir 1988;10: 
409–13

Frontal release signs in older people 
with peripheral vascular disease

A growing body of research examining 
neurological aspects of clinically “silent” cer-
ebrovascular disease suggests that neurologi-
cal signs indicative of generalised organic 
brain damage may occur in the absence of 
completed stroke. 1 These soft signs include 
primitive reflexes (frontal release signs), rep-
resenting an anatomical and functional 
reafferentation of cortical from subcortical struc-
tures. Primitive reflexes are known to occur in 
a wide variety of dementias, including 
Alzheimer's disease 2 and vascular dementia. 3

It is likely that the presence of undetected 
cerebrovascular disease accompanying pe-
ipheral vascular disease is underestimated, 
as peripheral vascular disease is known to be 
a risk factor for transient ischaemic attacks. A 
study assessing 373 older patients with 
peripheral vascular disease found that 72 of 
the 144 patients who had not experienced a 
transient ischaemic attack or stroke were 
found to have a degree of carotid stenosis of 
between 60% and 99%. 4

In the present study, the prevalence of 
primitive reflexes was examined in older peo-
ple with peripheral vascular disease and a 
non-vascular control group. Independent 
predictors of these reflexes were also exam-
ined in peripheral vascular disease. Both 
groups were drawn from the same geographi-
cal area. All were interviewed and examined 
outside hospital by myself. Interviewees were 
community residents from the catchment 
area of an inner city London teaching hospi-
tal.

Twenty five consecutive non-amputees on 
the waiting list for femoropopliteal bypass 
operation were compared with 25 postopera-
tive patients who had undergone elective hip 
operation. Both groups had no history of 
total stroke.

Between 6 months and 1 year after their 
operation. Both groups had no history of 
total stroke.
examined using a rating scale for the examination of frontal release signs (FRSS), with nine operationally defined items, each on a seven point semiquantitative scale. The nine reflexes were paratonia and palomental, hand grasp, foot grasp, glabellar, rooting, snout, and visual/tactile sucking reflexes. Neuropsychological measures included the assessment of frontal lobe function (trailmaking tests A and B, behavioural dyscontrol scale, and the controlled word association test) and generalised cognitive impairment (CAMCOG). Depression was assessed using the Hamilton rating scale for depression, 15 item geriatric depression scale, and diagnostic criteria for DSM IV major depressive disorder. Family history of depression, suicide to die, and suicidial ideation within the past year were also recorded, as were blood pressure and a checklist for chronic physical illness.

Total FRSS scores and scores on FRSS subcales were compared between groups using the Mann-Whitney U test for independent samples. In the peripheral vascular disease group, a correlation matrix for total FRSS score against DSM IV depressive disorder, CAMCOG score, behavioural dyscontrol scale score, verbal fluency score (total number of words beginning with F, A, and S) and trailmaking test times was examined using the Spearman correlation coefficient, corrected for tied values. Sex, blood pressure, and chronic physical illness. Behavioural dyscontrol scale scores, trailmaking A/B test times, and verbal fluency scores were first converted into binary variables according to whether they were at/above or below the median value for the group. CAMCOG score was divided into subjects scoring 69 or above or less than 69. Those associations with a two tailed significance of 0.1 or less were then entered into a linear regression equation using the stepwise method.

Patients with peripheral vascular disease had a higher mean score on the frontal release signs scale than controls (3.9 (SD 4.6) vs 1.7 (SD 1.0)), Mann-Whitney U=1800, Z=-3.33, two tailed p<0.001, as well as on glabellar and rooting reflexes (table). Only one variable (trailmaking B test time) was entered into the equation; this accounted for 23% of the variance in FRSS score (R²=0.46, 95% confidence interval (95% CI) 1.3–8.0, p=0.001).

In peripheral vascular disease, there is limited information available concerning the interrelated and neurological sequelae of coexisting cerebrovascular disease. Phillips et al found greater impairment in psychomotor speed and abstract reasoning in patients with peripheral vascular disease than age/sex matched controls, with less significant differences between the groups in verbal fluency, concentration, abstract thought, perception, and constructional skills. Another study by the same group found poorer performance in patients with peripheral vascular disease than controls on visual memory, trailmaking B test, and visuospatial skills. Patients with peripheral vascular disease were also equally impaired in all areas compared with a matched group of stroke patients.

Small numbers of patients, which may also have obscured other significant findings between the two groups, limit the present study. However, there is some evidence that clinically relevant cerebrovascular disease may accompany peripheral vascular disease and that the resultant disruption of frontal/subcortical brain function may not present with hard neurological signs. As it is possible that silent brain infarction was present in patients with peripheral vascular disease, further studies incorporating brain imaging are required before there can be a clearer understanding of the relation between peripheral and central vascular pathology.

I thank Dr Robert Howard for supervision of this study and Professor and Mr Paul Baskerville for allowing me to interview patients under their care. The study was carried out as part of a University of London MD thesis.

Rahul Rao
Department of Old Age Psychiatry, Maudsley Hospital
Institute of Psychiatry, London
Correspondence to: Dr Rahul Rao, Department of Old Age Psychiatry, Guy’s, King’s, and St Thomas Medical School, Job Ward, Thomas Guy House, Guy’s Hospital, St Thomas Street, London SE1 9RT, UK email rao@globalnet.co.uk

Table 1 Primitive reflexes in patients with peripheral vascular disease (n=25) and controls (n=25)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reflex</th>
<th>Hand grasp</th>
<th>Foot grasp</th>
<th>Glabellar</th>
<th>Palomental</th>
<th>Paratonia</th>
<th>Rooting</th>
<th>Snout</th>
<th>Sucking (tactile)</th>
<th>Sucking (visual)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U</td>
<td>274.0</td>
<td>312.5</td>
<td>199.5</td>
<td>287.5</td>
<td>287.0</td>
<td>235.5</td>
<td>287.5</td>
<td>261.0</td>
<td>287.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pValue</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0.001*</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>0.01*</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Higher mean score in people with peripheral vascular disease.

Examinations were performed at the transfer site, including neurological examination, assessment of mental status, and electroencephalogram. On transfer to this hospital the patient was alert, oriented, and cooperative. Although up to date on current affairs and able to describe the investigations performed at the transferring hospital, he scored only 23/30 on a mini mental status examination, with absent three word recall, impaired registration, and poor copying of a two-dimensional figure (figure B). Further bedside neuropsychological testing showed other findings indicative of constructional apraxia and left hemineglect. Specifically, when asked to draw a clock with the time at 10 minutes to 2 o’clock, all the numbers, and the clockhands, were placed on the right hand side of the clock (figure A). Copying of three dimensional line drawings was also significantly impaired (figure B).

Cranial nerve examination showed paralysia of the left arm and leg, with bilaterally symmetric bulk, tone, and deep tendon reflexes. The plantar response was flexor bilaterally. Sensory examination showed decreased pinprick and absent light touch, joint position sense, and vibration sense on the entire left side. There was also impaired perception of a tuning fork's vibration on the left side of the forehead, with a distinct demarcation in the midline. The rest of the physical examination was unremarkable.

Brain CT and MRI, CSF examination, and routine EEG were normal. Routine haematological and metabolic analyses plus erythrocyte sedimentation rate, serum lactate, prothrombin time, partial thromboplastin time, fasting serum glucose, HBa1c, serum Ig survey, and thyroid stimulating hormone were all within normal limits. A hypercoagulability profile was negative. A lipid profile showed mild hyperlipidaemia with increased low
density lipoprotein (3.92 mmol/l) and triglycerides (4.30 mmol/l) and low high density lipoprotein (0.73 mmol/l). Serum phenytoin concentration was therapeutic at 74 μmol/l. An ECG was normal.

Ophthalmological consultation and formal visual field testing demonstrated a concentrically constricted field of mild degree in the right eye and tunnel vision in the left eye. The patient consented to overnight video-EEG monitoring and was seen on multiple occasions to move his left arm and/or leg in a normal fashion, at one point using the left arm to readjust his bed covers shortly after arousal from sleep, before glancing briefly at the video camera and completing the task with his right arm. The prolonged EEG was normal.

A formal neuropsychological assessment performed in hospital documented impaired attention, concentration, and working memory, as well as several atypical calculation and spelling errors, the second involving unusual “near miss” letter substitutions or omission and spelling errors, the second involving unusual “near miss” letter substitutions or reversals (for example, “anixesy”, “execucive”). The formal testing identified no consistent evidence of visuospatial deficits or constructional apraxia. The findings were interpreted as inconsistent with the patient’s history but the possibility of a factitious aetiology was not specifically addressed—that is, tests designed to detect malingering during neuropsychological testing were not administered by the examiner, who had not been informed at the time of consultation of the presumptive neurological diagnosis of malinger or factitious disorder.

No further investigations were performed and the patient was transferred via the original hospital to a rehabilitation facility and subsequently discharged to home. Confronted with the findings of the video monitoring the patient appeared sanguine and accepting of the evidence that he should be able to move his left side. Six months later he was ambulatory but otherwise not significantly improved. He had been assessed by a psychiatrist but had refused psychiatric follow up, electing instead to be followed up by a psychologist. He understood his diagnosis to be “conversion disorder” and reported that he was actively collecting information on the subject via the internet.

Outpatient brain SPECT and visual and somatosensory evoked potentials performed 1 year after discharge demonstrated no hemispheric abnormalities. The patient remained off work and was receiving disability funding. He walked with a limp favouring his left side and complained of persistent decreased sensation on the left side. Forced choice sensory testing of finger and arm movement on the left demonstrated performance to be worse than chance (68% wrong choices). Motor bulk, tone, and reflexes were symmetric and plantar responses downgoing. He drew a clock normally at the 1 year follow up.

The clinical and laboratory findings described above indicate beyond any doubt the non-organic nature of this patient’s left hemiplegia/hemianesthesia. His seizure-like episodes at presentation are presumed to have been non-epileptic in origin (as had been suspected during his previous admission to hospital) although this cannot be definitively proved.

The inability to copy line drawings or to draw a clock is, from a neurologist’s perspective, typically associated with parietal lobe dysfunction, usually of the non-dominant hemisphere, especially if associated with left hemispatial neglect. To our knowledge, this is the first reported case of factitious clock drawing and constructional apraxia. Bedside mental status testing also demonstrated the more common simulated deficits of impaired attention and absent three word recall. In retrospect, the severe neglect on clock drawing was perhaps “too good to be true”, especially in the light of the near normal line bisection demonstrated on the same day. The mirror image distortion of the house was also very unusual and, furthermore, the mirror reversal itself is evidence of lack of clinical neglect. The distortion of the cube, however, could easily be misinterpreted as evidence of organic constructional impairment if seen in the absence of the other relevant clinical and laboratory information.

During follow up, the patient admitted to feeling tremendous occupation related stresses, and described how he had come to both fear and detest his job. Given the clear benefit to the patient of removal from his work environment, the relapse of his symptomatology just as he was scheduled for return to work after his first non-organic hemiplegic episode, and the intentionality required to feign poor clock drawing and constructional apraxia, there is much to support a diagnosis of malingering. Nevertheless, classification as a factitious disorder is at least as justifiable in view of the patient’s willingness to undergo medical investigations, including video monitoring.

It is unclear how or when the patient acquired the information needed to mimic a constructional apraxia. Previous bedside neuropsychological evaluations may have served to familiarise him with the format of such testing, acting as an impetus to research the issue of stroke and focal brain deficits (which might also have occurred after his father’s stroke), much in the same way he is now researching conversion disorder, thereby discovering what expected answers should look like. Despite repeated questioning, however, no evidence could be gathered from the patient to support this speculation.

R WENNBERG

Department of Medicine, Division of Neurology, The Toronto Hospital, University of Toronto, Toronto, ON, Canada

Correspondence to: Dr R Wennberg, EC8–022, The Toronto Hospital, 399 Bathurst Street, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5T 2S8. Telephone 001 416 603 5402; fax 001 416 603 5768.


Anosogasia and mania associated with right thalamic haemorrhage

Both anosogasia and secondary mania are associated with right hemispheric lesions. These two non-dominant syndromes, however, are rarely described as occurring together. We present a patient with a right thalamic haemorrhage giving rise to profound denial of hemiplegia and elated mood. This case suggests mechanisms for the common production of mania and anosogasia.

A 53 year old, right handed, black man, with a history of alcohol misuse and dependence and untreated hypertension, was brought to the emergency room a few hours after developing an intense headache and left sided numbness and weakness.

On admission he was described as “belligerent,” “agitated,” and “confused.” Blood pressure was 240/160. Neurological examination disclosed left lower facial droop, decreased left corneal and gag reflexes, and left hemiparesis with dense sensory deficits. With increasing obtundation, the patient was transferred to the intensive care unit and intubated. Brain MRI showed a large, left sided, hyperacute thalamic bleed with mass effect and oedema. The patient was extubated 2 days later and 4 days after the stroke he was described as being drowsy and inattentive, but was able to answer questions
appropriately. Neurological examination showed contralateral gaze preference, supra-nuclear vertical gaze palsy, difficulty converging, left sided flaccid hemiparesis, and dense, left sided hemianesthesia. Deep tendon reflexes were absent on the left and Babinski’s reflex was present on the left. In addition, visual extinction and neglect were present. At the time of onset of right sided weakness the patient insisted that he was “fine,” and an ambulance was called over his objections. After being extubated, the patient acknowledged that he had had a stroke, but, despite his hemiparesis, insisted that he was ready to go home and go back to work. His belief in his ability to walk led to near falls, and he was moved to a room nearer to the nurses’ station for closer observation. He told the nurses that someone else’s arm was in his bed. On one occasion, holding up his left arm with his right, he told the nurse to, “take it away; it keeps scratching me.” That the left arm “smelled funny” was another reason he wanted the nurses to take it away.

Four weeks after the stroke he first acknowledged that his left arm belonged to him, though he had repeatedly recalled being otherwise. By this time he had a moderate hemiplegia and recognised “a little weakness,” but continued to insist that he was well and able to return to work. By the 6th week and the patient more consistently acknowledged that he was weak on the left side of his body. A request for disabled housing “so that I won’t be a burden to my family” seemed to indicate an appreciation of his impaired function. He was feeling, within an hour of making such statements the patient might insist that after a week’s exercise he would be ready to return to work. His awareness of his hemiplegia fluctuated for 8 weeks after stroke before being fixed, but remained shallow after 12 weeks; he no longer planned to return to work and for closer observation. He told the nurses that his girlfriend was surprised when he kissed for closer observation. He re-


determined the presence of denial of ownership and presence of decreased cerebral blood volume within the right parietal, frontal, or temporal cortex.

This is a case of anosognosia of hemiplegia and mania co-occurring in a patient with a large right thalamic haemorrhage. Although anosognosia and mania are not generally thought of as occurring together, when Babinski introduced the term anosognosia he used it as one of his examples in a case in which the patient thought he was “a little overexcited,” and in a later paper he presented a case in which there was “a certain agitation, which expresses itself by exaggerated loquacity, a decrease in attention, and a tendency to erotic ideas.”

108

Elizabeth Liebson
Department of Psychiatry, Tufts, New England Medical Center, 750 Washington Street, Box 1007, Boston, MA 02111, USA. Telephone 617 636 1633; email eliebson@opal.tufts.edu


Starkstein SE, Pederoff JP, Price TR, et al. Ano-


Epileptic cardiac asystole

A patient is reported on with habitual episodes of collapse and loss of consciousness associated with EEG evidence of focal epileptiform discharges. Simultaneous EEG recordings disclosed 25 seconds of cardiac ventricular asystole occurring 24 seconds after the onset of electrical seizure activity. After changes to antiepileptic medication and the insertion of a permanent cardiac pacemaker he had had no further episodes. In cases of epileptic cardiac dysrhythmia, isolated EEG or ECG recordings may prove insufficient and prolonged simultaneous EEG/ECG monitoring may be required.

Cardiac arrhythmias subsequent to epileptic seizures have been recognised for more than 30 years. They provoke diagnostic confusion and may be a mechanism of sudden unexplained death in epilepsy. Whereas sinus tachycardia was noted to accompany more than 90% of epileptic seizures, isolated bradycardia was seen much

Downloaded from http://jnnp.bmj.com/ on October 9, 2016 - Published by group.bmj.com
less commonly (only 1 of 74 seizures recorded). A review in 1996 of the “ictal bradycardia syndrome” showed only 15 documented cases in the literature of either bradycardia or asystole associated with seizures. Most patients had temporal lobe seizures. The longest duration of asystole previously reported is in a 17 year old man with temporal lobe epilepsy who sustained a 22 second pause in cardiac output. More typically the asystolic periods in documented cases are in the region of 5–10 seconds. Shorter duration asystole may not compromise cerebral function sufficiently to cause loss of consciousness. Implantation of a cardiac pacemaker is advocated but does not ensure that lapses of consciousness are eliminated if these are directly related to the seizure rather than to the secondary asystole. We report on a patient with epileptic cardiac asystole of 25 seconds duration demonstrated by prolonged simultaneous EEG/ECG monitoring which responded well to pacemaker insertion.

A previously well 34 year old right handed builder was referred with a 1 year history of fortnightly episodes of loss of consciousness. There was no associated warning, aura, chest pain, or palpitations and the patient was only aware of the episode once consciousness was lost. EEG monitoring showed electrographic seizure onset and subsequent bradycardia and asystole.
restored and he found himself lying on the floor. On recovery there was no confusion, drowsiness, dysphasia, or diuresis. Often, however, he sustained soft tissue injuries to his face and scalp.

Witnesses reported that the patient would, without warning, suddenly collapse on the ground where he would remain unresponsive, inaccessible, and motionless for 90 to 120 seconds. On two occasions he appeared confused and disorientated immediately before a collapse. During the period of unconsciousness he would demonstrate no involuntary movements, orofacial automatisms, or cyanosis but he would become pale and “ashen” while staring straight ahead with a glazed look. Observation of the episode his four would return to normal and within 2 minutes he would have fully recovered. Unusually during one reported episode of unconsciousness he was seen to briefly extend the fingers of both hands.

He was admitted to his local hospital and CT, MRI, interictal EEG, and 24 hour ECG were normal. No episodes were witnessed while he was an inpatient but they were thought to be hypoxic in origin and therefore before he was started on phenytoin, with no benefit. Carbamazepine was added, again with minimal effect. The patient was then referred to the Epilepsy Assessment Centre of The National Society for Epilepsy and National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery for further investigation and management.

Cardiovascular and neurological examination was normal as were MRI and routine interictal EEG. Sixteen channel ambulatory EEG using an Oxford Instruments digital EEG receiver was performed continuously for 340 hours before an episode was captured. Intermittent rare spikes were seen over the right frontal region during sleep. The thorax showed poor respiratory movement, and the patient showed paradoxical movement of the abdomen in the supine position. Tendon reflexes were hyporeactive in all limbs. The patient’s sensations of touch and pain were mildly impaired in the four limbs. He was positive for the Chaddock test.

The patient had no history of diabetes mellitus, pulmonary disease, or other medical problems. There was no familial history of neurological disorder, including entrapment neuropathies. After a few months, he noted that in his teens he had experienced some episodes of right peroneal and right axillary nerve palsies which resolved themselves over a few months.

In a neurological examination, the patient’s mental state and cranial nerves were normal. Evidence of muscular atrophy and lumbar lordosis was found. The muscular atrophy was prominent in the shoulder girdle, intercostal muscles, paravertebral muscles, and pelvic girdle, and moderate atrophy was present in all four limbs (figure). There was moderate weakness of the shoulder and pelvic girdle and mild weakness of the distal limbs. The thorax showed poor respiratory movement, and the patient showed paradoxical movement of the abdomen in the supine position. Tendon reflexes were hyporeactive in all limbs. The patient’s sensations of touch and pain were mildly impaired in the four limbs. He was positive for the Chaddock test.

The thorax showed poor respiratory movement, and the patient showed paradoxical movement of the abdomen in the supine position. Tendon reflexes were hyporeactive in all limbs. The patient’s sensations of touch and pain were mildly impaired in the four limbs. He was positive for the Chaddock test.

Cardiac dysrhythmias are an uncommon accompaniment to epileptic seizures, the commonest being irregular tachycardia but serious consequence of partial seizures. In a series of 26 patients with 74 temporal lobe seizures in which simultaneous EEG and ECG recordings were recorded, ictal arrhythmias occurred in 52% of seizures, the commonest being irregular abrupt changes in heart rate, (both acceleration and deceleration) occurring towards the end of the period of EEG abnormality. Interictally, patients with epilepsy seem no more likely than age and sex matched healthy subjects to experience arrhythmias although in one study patients with epilepsy had a faster ventricular rate and a longer QT interval than controls.1

It has been hypothesised that there is later-alisation with respect to central autonomic cardiac control with an increase in heart rate seen after an increase in duration of amobarbital and inactivation of the left hemisphere and a decrease in heart rate on right hemispheric inactivation. Experimental stimulation of the rostral posterior insular cortex in anaesthetised rats has been shown to induce tachycardia and more caudal region stimulation to cause bradycardia.2 Addition-ally, prolonged stimulation resulted in ventricular ectopies, heart block, QT prolongation, and death. In preclinical temporal lobectomy patients stimulation of the left insular cortex (particularly posteriorly) produced bradycardia and a depressor response significantly more often than tachycardia and a pressor effect.3 It was suggested that an ictal epileptic discharge in the insular cortex may result in cardiac arrhythmias. Recurrent episodes of loss of consciousness are a common clinical feature. An accurate diagnosis relies principally on the patient’s and witnesses’ accounts of events. Further investigations are frequently required which are often normal unless an episode is captured during monitoring. Recording solely the EEG or the ECG may result in erroneous conclusions being drawn and insufficient or inappropriate therapy being instituted. Distinction between a primary cardiac arrhythmia and a secondary central arrhythmia is possible only with simultaneous EEG/ECG recordings.

FERGUS J RUGG-GUNN JOHN S DUNCAN SHELDON M SMITH

Epilepsy Research Group, University Department of Clinical Neurology, Institute of Neurology, The National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery, Queen Square, London WC1N 3BG, UK

Correspondence to: Professor John S Duncan, National Society for Epilepsy, Challfont St Peter, Gerrards Cross, Bucks SL9 0RJ, UK

email j.duncan@ion.ucl.ac.uk

delayed (8.7 ms (normal<8.0)). Sensory nerve conduction studies showed a reduced amplitude of sensory nerve action potentials and conduction slowing in all the nerves tested. Electromyography carried out in the supraspinatus, deltoid, biceps, flexor carpi ulnaris, brachioradialis, quadriceps femoris, biceps femoris, tibialis anterior, and gastrocnemius muscles showed polyphasic motor unit potentials of long duration, but denervation potentials were rare. A left sural nerve biopsy showed scattered tomaculous thickening of the myelin sheath and some abnormally thin axonal myelin sheaths. The density of myelinated fibres was reduced (5726/mm²). A gene analysis disclosed a 53% gene dose of PMP-22 related to normal controls, using Southern blots of DNA digested with EcoRI.

Given the possibility of superimposing demyelinating neuropathy, especially chronic inflammatory demyelinating polyneuropathy, oral prednisolone (60 mg/day) was given for 1 month. However, the patient’s clinical condition did not respond to this treatment. Pulmonary dysfunction and proximal muscle weakness were almost steady during the next 3 years.

We examined the patient’s elder sister (64 years old), elder brother (62 years old), and younger sister (58 years old), although they had no neurological complaints. All of them had experienced generalised hyporeflexia or areflexia but no weakness or sensory loss, and nerve conduction studies showed moderate conduction slowing with accentuation at the common entrapment sites, suggesting demyelinating neuropathy.

Our patient recalled experiencing recurrent episodes of transit entrapment mononeuropathies, and the familial occurrence of asymptomatic entrapment neuropathy was detected by nerve conduction studies. The presence of tomacula, and genetic analysis confirmed a diagnosis of HNPP. However, the patient’s dominant clinical features—respiratory failure and proximal muscle weakness—were atypical for HNPP. Although respiratory muscle weakness has been reported in hereditary motor and sensory neuropathy (HMSN), there has been no report of respiratory insufficiency associated with HNPP to our knowledge.

The weakness of the truncal muscles, including the respiratory accessory muscle, is a possible cause of respiratory failure in our patient. On the other hand, he had experienced hyperventilation in the supine posture and paradoxical movement of the abdomen, which suggested diaphragmatic weakness. Also, chest radiography showed poor movement of the diaphragm. Although the prolongation of distal latency in the phrenic nerve was mild considering the severity of respiratory failure, assessment of axonal loss is not possible with phrenic nerve stimulation. In fact, phrenic nerve latency is not necessarily associated with pulmonary dysfunction in HMSN. Diffuse proximal weakness in our patient is an uncommon finding as for HNPP. Mancardi et al reported on three patients with progressive sensory-motor polyneuropathy associated with 17p11.2 deletion, and the initial symptom of one patient was proximal weakness in one arm. We propose that our patient represents a clinical phenotypic variability among HNPP. It may be necessary to pay attention to respiratory function in HNPP.

Spinal accessory neuropathy and internal jugular thrombosis after carotid endarterectomy

Spinal accessory neuropathy is a rare complication of carotid endarterectomy (CEA). Internal jugular venous thrombosis after CEA has also been reported rarely, but is likely more common; as internal jugular...
venous thrombosis is often asymptomatic, or presents with non-specific pain, it is probably unrecognised in many cases. 1 Concurrent ipsilateral spinal accessory neuropathy and internal jugular venous thrombosis after CEA is expected to be rare, and this is underscored by the lack of published cases. Despite this apparent rarity, a common pathogenetic mechanism for postoperative spinal accessory neuropathy and internal jugular venous thrombosis may well be present, at least in some cases, which may lead to the consideration of the possibility of both when either is discovered.

We report on a patient who developed right spinal accessory neuropathy and internal jugular venous thrombosis after right CEA. A 59 year old man underwent right CEA for possibly symptomatic stenosis. Angiography had shown 90% stenosis of the right internal carotid. The operation was done under general anaesthesia. The carotid bifurcation was unusually distal, necessitating a long dissection and high retraction. No immediate postoperative complications were evident. The next day, the patient complained of mild pain at the operative site, but did not notice any weakness. The pain spread into his right shoulder within several days; at that time, he also noted difficulty raising his right arm. His symptoms worsened further a few weeks later, and the symptoms persisted. He was presented for neurological evaluation 4 months after CEA. At that time, he had some induration along the incision site and a palpable supraclavicular cord. Right arm abduction produced more prominent scapular winging and was limited to 90 degrees due to pain and weakness. Electrodiagnostic studies were consistent with partial right spinal accessory neuropathy with minor denervation of the right trapezius. Cervical ultrasonography and MRI demonstrated right internal jugular venous thrombosis. The patient was treated with a shoulder support, analgesics, and low dose aspirin. There was no significant clinical change 1 year after CEA. Repeat electrodiagnostic studies were consistent with chronic right spinal accessory neuropathy, and repeat ultrasonography showed persistent right internal jugular venous thrombosis.

The spinal accessory nerve courses along the internal jugular vein and near the internal carotid artery, typically well above the carotid bifurcation. It stands to reason that a high incision and retraction resulting from a high carotid bifurcation would place the nerve at risk. Whether this realisation may lead to any technical modification to decrease the risk of spinal accessory neuropathy in those with a high bifurcation remains to be seen.

From our search, internal jugular venous thrombosis after CEA has been reported in only one case.2 As Southcott et al noted, retraction of the internal jugular during CEA may cause thrombosis from venous stasis or endothelial injury. Other causes of internal jugular venous thrombosis include jugular cannulation, blunt cervical trauma, and a hypercoagulable state. Internal jugular venous thrombosis may occur as a complication after neck dissection, often with recanalisation after several months.3 The presence of induration about the incision site and a palpable supraclavicular cord in our patient led us to suspect venous thrombosis. Internal jugular venous thrombosis may include intraoperative traction, haematoma, and postoperative inflammation and scarring.

Although the onset of either spinal accessory neuropathy or internal jugular venous thrombosis in our patient cannot be determined precisely, it is likely that both developed at about the same time. The delayed worsening of spinal accessory neuropathy in this case suggests postoperative scarring or inflammation. The lack of improvement after a year, as in some other cases of spinal accessory neuropathy after CEA, implies considerable axonal injury, but does not clarify the manner of injury.

Ischaemic stroke in a sportsman who consumed MaHuang extract and creatine monohydrate for body building

We report the first case of extensive cerebral infarct in a young sportsman consuming high doses of MaHuang extract and creatine monohydrate. This should raise awareness in the community to possible serious adverse effects of energy supplements.

A 33 year old man had a severe apasia on awakening in the morning of 23 January 1999. He did not complain of other symptoms. He was referred to our department on 26 January 1999. He had a Wernicke aphasia with a slight right sided face and arm weakness and a right Babinski sign. His blood pressure was 140/60 and his pulse rate 54 per minute. Brain CT showed signs of extensive left middle cerebral artery infarct. Cervical ultrasound duplex scanning and cervical angiography were normal. Cerebral CSF examination and EEG were also normal except for a patent foramen ovale.

The patient had no vascular risk factors, in particular no tobacco use, and he was perfectly fit until his stroke. He was a sportsman with 2 hours daily intensive training for body building. He was working as a baggage handler in an international airline company. During a recent journey to Miami, Florida, he bought tablets of “energy pills” in a shopping store to enhance his athletic performances. The first drug contained MaHuang extract (corresponding to 20 mg ephedra alkaloids), 200 mg caffeine, 100 mg L-theanine, and 200 µg chromium per capsule. The second drug contained 6000 mg creatine monohydrate, 1000 mg taurine, 100 µg inosine, and 5 µg coenzyme Q10 per scoop. He consumed 40–60 mg ephedra alkaloids, 400–600 mg caffeine, and 6000 mg creatine monohydrate daily for about 6 weeks before his stroke.

Although a paradoxical embolism through a patent foramen ovale in this patient cannot be excluded as he recently returned from a transatlantic air flight, there was no deep venous thrombosis and D-dimers were normal. However, ephedrine has an indirect sympathomimetic action on the heart and first for arterial vasconstriction in addition to other catecholaminergic effects. Both ischaemic and haemorrhagic stroke associated with ephedrine use have been reported.1 Acute myocardial infarction and acute psychosis have also been reported after taking ephedrine and other sympathomimetic drugs.2 Ephedrine and its metabolites are natural products that are used in non-prescription medicines for multiple uses. Ephedra is a constituent of an energy supplement in non-prescription tablets. Our patient had a slight increase in creatine concentration although not other possibilities. As in our patient, high carotid dissection and retraction have been reported to precede spinal accessory neuropathy.3

The spinal accessory nerve courses along the internal jugular vein and near the internal carotid artery, typically well above the carotid bifurcation. It stands to reason that a high incision and retraction resulting from a high carotid bifurcation would place the nerve at risk. Whether this realisation may lead to any technical modification to decrease the risk of spinal accessory neuropathy in those with a high bifurcation remains to be seen.

From our search, internal jugular venous thrombosis after CEA has been reported in only one case. As Southcott et al noted, retraction of the internal jugular during CEA may cause thrombosis from venous stasis or endothelial injury. Other causes of internal jugular venous thrombosis include jugular cannulation, blunt cervical trauma, and a hypercoagulable state. Internal jugular venous thrombosis may occur as a complication after neck dissection, often with recanalisation after several months. The presence of induration about the incision site and a palpable supraclavicular cord in our patient led us to suspect venous thrombosis. Internal jugular venous thrombosis may include intraoperative traction, haematoma, and postoperative inflammation and scarring.

Although the onset of either spinal accessory neuropathy or internal jugular venous thrombosis in our patient cannot be determined precisely, it is likely that both developed at about the same time. The delayed worsening of spinal accessory neuropathy in this case suggests postoperative scarring or inflammation. The lack of improvement after a year, as in some other cases of spinal accessory neuropathy after CEA, implies considerable axonal injury, but does not clarify the manner of injury.

GEORGE WOODWARD
RAM VENKATESH
Department of Neurology, University of Kansas, and Neurology Section, VA Eastern Kansas Health Care System, VA, USA

Correspondence to: Dr George Woodward, Neurology Section (111), VA Medical Centre, Leavenworth, Kansas 66048, USA. Telephone 001 913 682 2000 extension 2441; fax 001 913 758 4225.

it remained in the normal range. Whether the use of high doses of caffeine can enhance the cardiovascular effect of ephedrine remains a possibility as stroke after taking a combination of caffeine and amphetamine has been reported.1

Drug addiction in sportsmen and sportswomen is becoming a major concern in our societies, involving both professionals and amateurs. As energy supplements, thought to enhance performance, are easily available in some countries without the need of medical prescription, everybody should be aware that these so called “benign” drugs may have major adverse effects.

This first case report of an extensive cerebral infarct in a young sportsman consuming high doses of MaHuang extract and creatine monohydrate should alert the sport community to this possible adverse effects of energy supplements, particularly when used in multiple combination.

K VAHEDI
V DOMIGO
P AMARENCO
M-G BOUSSER
Service de Neurologie, Hôpital Lariboisière, Paris,
France

Correspondence to: Dr K Vahedi, Service de Neurologie, Hôpital Lariboisière, 2 Rue A Paré, 75010 Paris, France
email vahedi@ccr.jussieu.fr


Petroclival meningioma as a cause of ipsilateral cervicofacial dyskinesias

Hyperkinetic movement disorders of facial and neck muscles such as blepharospasm, hemifacial spasm, facial myokimia, and cervical dystonia have rarely been associated with unilateral brainstem or posterior fossa pathologies. We report a case of unilateral cervicofacial dyskinesias due to an ipsilateral petroclival meningioma.

A 32 year old left handed woman complained about left sided facial dysaesthesia of the upper quadrant of her face for 1 year. In addition she had intermittent ipsilateral headache. A left sided facial palsy and hypogeusia developed. When progressive hearing loss and persistent ipsilateral tinnitus occurred she sought medical advice. She was referred to our department for further treatment after a large tumour in the left cerebellopontine angle had been demonstrated by MRI. On admission, the left corneal reflex was absent. There was marked hypoaesthesia of the first two divisions of the left trigeminal nerve and a mild left facial palsy. There was also hypogeusia of the left half of the tongue. Speech was slightly dysarthric. During examination dystonic and choreic movements of the left facial muscles were seen. The dystonic grimacing increased when the patient was being observed. There were also intermittent jerky dystonic head movements with turning of the head to the left, associated with slight elevation of the left shoulder. The facial movement disorder was clearly different from hemifacial spasm. There were no tonic or clonic synchronous contractions of facial muscles and no signs of involuntary coactivation. The patient barely noted the dyskinesias. Audiometry showed a hearing threshold at 30 Db on the left side and lack of stapedius reflex on the left side. Oculovestibular response to caloric stimulation was

(A) Axial T2 weighted SE MR images of a 32 year old woman with left sided cervicofacial dyskinesias show a large left petroclival meningioma compressing the brainstem. (B) Coronal inversion recovery MR scans demonstrate marked displacement and distortion of the brainstem due to the petroclival meningioma. (C) Gadolinium enhanced axial T1 weighted SE MR scans 3 months postoperatively show complete removal of the tumour and normalisation of the displacement of the brain stem.
decreased on the left side. Furthermore, there was mild left dysdakotosis.

Neurography of the facial nerve was normal on both sides. Needle myography of the left frontalis and orbicularis oculi did not show signs of denervation.

An MRI study showed a large gadolinium enhancing tumour within the left cerebellar vermis. T1-weighted axial images showed a discrete blush of the tumour as typically seen in meningo- 

ims. The tumour was totally removed by a combined transpetrosal supratentorial and infratentorial presigmoidal approach. The postoperative course was uneventful and there were no new deficits. The facial palsy improved slightly as well as the trigeminal hypeaesthesia. Audiometry remained un- 

changed. Postoperative imaging showed no residual tumour and the displacement of the brain stem within the posterior fossa had resolved. Marked improvement of the left sided craniofacial dyskinesias oc-


curred during the next weeks.

The postoperative improvement of the dystonic and choreic gracing and the cervical dystonia indicates a causal association between the petroclival meningioma and the segmental hyperkinetic movement disorders. Such a rela-

tion is supported also by the absence of a fam-

ily history of movement disorders and the absence of previous exposure to neuroleptic medication. Hyperkinetic movement disorders due to tumours of the brainstem or of the pos-

terior fossa have been reported only rarely. Asymmetric blepharospasm was recently 

found in a patient with an ipsilateral mesencephalic cyst. Hemifacial spasm was seen in patients with dystonic neurinomas, meningiomas, and epidermoid tumours of the cerebel-

lopontine angle. Acoustic neurinomas and anaplastic pontocerebellar glioma can be asso-

ciated with facial myokymia and spastic parietal facial contracture. Also, cervical dystonia due to tumours of the cerebellopontine angle have been reported recently.

The pathophysiological mechanisms re- 

ponsible for dystonic movement disorders 

curred by structural or functional lesion of the brainstem are not fully understood. The possibility of denervation supersensitivity of 

cranial nerve nuclei has been proposed previ-

ously. Alternatively, enhanced excitability of brainstem interneurons has been suggested. This pathophysiological mechanism is sup-

ported by the findings of blink reflex studies in patients with blepharospasm, spasmodic dysphonia, and cervical dystonia. Tolaso et al found significantly less inhibition of the test stimulus polysynaptic late response and marked enhancement of the recovery curve of the late response under such conditions com-

pared with the response in healthy sub-

jects.

Our case provides further evidence that 

functional impairment by compression and distortion of the brain stem may cause hyper-

kinetic cervicofacial movement disorders. It is not supported also by the finding that such movement disorders are accessible to surgical treatment of the underlying pathology. Therefore, pa-

ients with cranial or cervical dystonia or 

choric dyskinesia should undergo MR imag-

ing to rule out a surgically treatable cause.

THOMAS Pohle
Department of Neurosurgery, Inselspital, University of Berna, Berna, Switzerland

JEAN-MARC BURGUNDER
Department of Neurology

Correspondence to: Dr J K Krauss, Department of Neurosurgery, University Hospital, Klinikum Mannheim, Theodor-Kutzer Ufer 1-3, 68167 Mannheim, Germany
email: joachim.krauss@nch.mh.uni-heidelberg.de

1042-5.
3 Krauss JK, Wahlho AK, Scheremet R, et al. Facial myokymia and spastic parietal facial con-

tracture as the result of anaplastic pontocere-

4 Krauss JK, Seeger W, Janovic J. Cervical dysto-

5 Tolaso E, Montserrat L, Bayes A. Blink reflex studies in focal dystonias: enhanced excitability of 

brainstem interneurons in cranial dystonia and spasmodic torticollis. Mov Disord 1998;3: 
61-9.

Acute multifocal cerebral white matter lesions during transfer factor therapy

Transfer factor is an active substance of unknown structure present in dialysable leuco-

cyte extract which is assumed to transfer cell mediated immunity in an antigen specific fashion. The mechanisms of action of trans-

fer factor are still far from clear; in vitro dia-

lyzable leucocyte extract increases macro-

phage activation and interleukin (IL) 1 produc-

tion and enhances leucocyte chemo-

taxis and natural killer function. Transfer fac-

tor has been reported to stimulate the cell 

mediated antigen specific response in patients 

with various infections; therefore, treatment with transfer factor has been suggested in 

patients with selective deficits in cell medi-

ated immunity such as in some refractory 

neoplasms and chronic infections. Moreover, it has been used in the treatment of uveitis. 

Administration of dialysable leucocyte ex-

tract has seemed to be free of hypersensitivity, long lasting side effects, or complications, 

except for transitory hyperpyrexia.

We report on a patient in whom multiple 

cerebral white matter lesions developed after 

receiving transfer factor and who died of brain 

stem lesions. The clinical course of the disease was characterized by slowly progressive 

neurological symptoms and signs: headache, mental confu-

sion, and right hemiparesis. The patient had a 30 year history of relapsing haemorrhage. 

In January 1995 retinal vasculitis was diagnosed at fundoscopy and in July 1995 he started 

oral transfer factor as dialysable leucocyte extract twice a week. He complained of gen-

eralised weakness after the second dose and the referring symptoms developed after the 

third dose.

Neurological examination on admission showed mental confusion and severe right 

spastic hemiplegia with the Babinski sign.

No fever or meningismus were present.

Laboratory examinations on admission showed a slight increase in total serum protein (8.4 g/l, normal 6.0–8.0 g/l), although 

most of the increase was due to an increase in albumin (5.5 g/l, normal 4.0–5.0 g/l). Antinuclear antibodies, rheumatoid factor, VDRL titre, venereal disease research laboratory (VDRL) titre, and antinuclear antibodies, rheumatoid factor, VDRL titre, and antineutrophil cytoplasmic antibodies, lupus anticoagulants, cryoglobulins, immune complexes, complement fractions, and neoplastic markers.

Sorrel IgM but not IgG against cytomegalovirus (CMV), Herpes simplex, Varicella zoster, Epstein–Barr virus, and JC virus were present. Polymerase chain reaction search for Herpes simplex 1 and 2, Varicella zoster, CMV, Epstein–Barr virus, and JC virus in the CSF was negative.

Cell, protein, and glucose concentrations in CSF were normal. No oligoclonal bands or antibody against CMV, Herpes simplex, Varicella zoster, Epstein–Barr virus, and JC virus were present. Cell, protein, and glucose concentrations in CSF were normal. No oligoclonal bands or antibody against CMV, Herpes simplex, Varicella zoster, Epstein–Barr virus, and JC virus were present. Cell, protein, and glucose concentrations in CSF were normal. No oligoclonal bands or antibody against CMV, Herpes simplex, Varicella zoster, Epstein–Barr virus, and JC virus were present. Cell, protein, and glucose concentrations in CSF were normal. No oligoclonal bands or antibody against CMV, Herpes simplex, Varicella zoster, Epstein–Barr virus, and JC virus were present. Cell, protein, and glucose concentrations in CSF were normal. No oligoclonal bands or antibody against CMV, Herpes simplex, Varicella zoster, Epstein–Barr virus, and JC virus were present. Cell, protein, and glucose concentrations in CSF were normal. No oligoclonal bands or antibody against CMV, Herpes simplex, Varicella zoster, Epstein–Barr virus, and JC virus were present. Cell, protein, and glucose concentrations in CSF were normal. No oligoclonal bands or antibody against CMV, Herpes simplex, Varicella zoster, Epstein–Barr virus, and JC virus were present. Cell, protein, and glucose concentrations in CSF were normal. No oligoclonal bands or antibody against CMV, Herpes simplex, Varicella zoster, Epstein–Barr virus, and JC virus were present. Cell, protein, and glucose concentrations in CSF were normal. No oligoclonal bands or antibody against CMV, Herpes simplex, Varicella zoster, Epstein–Barr virus, and JC virus were present. Cell, protein, and glucose concentrations in CSF were normal. No oligoclonal bands or antibody against CMV, Herpes simplex, Varicella zoster, Epstein–Barr virus, and JC virus were present. Cell, protein, and glucose concentrations in CSF were normal. No oligoclonal bands or antibody against CMV, Herpes simplex, Varicella zoster, Epstein–Barr virus, and JC virus were present. Cell, protein, and glucose concentrations in CSF were normal. No oligoclonal bands or antibody against CMV, Herpes simplex, Varicella zoster, Epstein–Barr virus, and JC virus were present. Cell, protein, and glucose concentrations in CSF were normal. No oligoclonal bands or antibody against CMV, Herpes simplex, Varicella zoster, Epstein–Barr virus, and JC virus were present. Cell, protein, and glucose concentrations in CSF were normal. No oligoclonal bands or antibody against CMV, Herpes simplex, Varicella zoster, Epstein–Barr virus, and JC virus were present.
the diagnosis of vasculitis or neuro-Bechet’s disease although in the absence of biopsy. In fact, the clinical, laboratory, and MRI findings were not typical and a low titre of anticoagulant antibodies is found in 2% of healthy subjects.1

The occurrence at different time of focal cerebral white matter lesions highly supports the diagnosis of multiple sclerosis, but some clinical and laboratory findings in the our patient are not typical for this condition. Mental confusion is not common at the onset of multiple sclerosis whereas it is often found in acute disseminated encephalitis.1 In addition, CSF without oligoclonal banding argues against a diagnosis of multiple sclerosis, whereas it is commonly found in acute disseminated encephalitis.1 On the other hand the possibility that acute disseminated encephalitis may recur has been accepted6 and on the basis of the patient’s clinical picture and CSF, we favoured such a diagnosis.

The pathogenic mechanisms underlying the triggering, development, and duration of multiple sclerosis and acute disseminated encephalitis are still far from clear despite the progress made in unravelling them. Some findings suggest that acute disseminated encephalitis and multipe sclerosis lie at the two poles of an autoimmune range, in which autoantigen reactivity is only temporary and direct against a single antigen in acute disseminated encephalitis and multiple antigens in multiple sclerosis.

Although the hypothesis that dialysable leucocyte extract had triggered an autoimmune disorder in our patient cannot be proved, our finding is in line with the report of multiple cerebral lesions after therapy with IL-2 in patients with malignancies or HIV infections.7 On the other hand, the fact that acute disseminated encephalitis is often correlated with the administration of foreign proteins, such as during vaccinations or viral infections6 led us to postulate in this patient a cell mediated immunological mechanism. Therefore, an immunological cross reaction between viral antigens (or other foreign material contained in vaccines) and various parts of the nervous system resulting in acute disseminated encephalitis might have occurred. As already noted, dialysable leucocyte extract contains a multitude of immunostimulating or potentially activating substances so it is impossible to pinpoint which one could have been responsible for the demyelinating effect seen in our patient. This notwithstanding, our finding indicates that neurological surveillance is worthy in patients assuming dialysable leucocyte extract therapy.

FRANCESCO G FOSCHI
LORENZO MARSIGLI
MAURO BERNARDI
Seminaria Medica, Dipartimento di Medicina Interna, Epatologia e Cardioangiologia, Università degli Studi di Bologna, Policlinico Sant’Orsola, via G Massarenti 9, 40138 Bologna, Italy. Telephone 0039 51 308943; fax 0039 51 308966; email: fgfoschi@tin.it


Fahr’s disease and Asperger’s syndrome in a patient with primary hypoparathyroidism

Abnormal calcium phosphate metabolism has not previously been associated with Asperger’s syndrome, a form of pervasive developmental disorder. Nor have symmetric calcifications of the basal ganglia, dentate nuclei and cortex, or Fahr’s disease8—with idiopathic or associated with hypoparathyroidism—previously been associated with this handicap. We present the case of a 24 year old man with Asperger’s syndrome, primary hypoparathyroidism, and multifocal brain calcifications.

According to medical history, the patient’s mother had received weekly injections of Depoprovera during pregnancy. A single child born after a normal term delivery, he underwent surgery for an inguinal hernia at 3 weeks. Developmental milestones were only moderately delayed. At 9 months, he rolled instead of crawling. He walked at 15 months, spoke at 2 years with poor articulation, and still speaks in short, unelaborated sentences. His social and language development lagged in grade school and he occasionally got into fights. In late adolescence, antisocial behaviour took the form of shoplifting and repeated long distance calls to pornographic hot lines. As an adult, his social adaptation remains poor: he currently lives with his mother and works irregularly as a dishwasher in a restaurant. He is indifferent, isolated, and resists novelty. He enjoys repetitive and solitary activities such as slot machine games and playing the piano.

Neurological examination showed bilateral hyperreflexia, mild imprecision of fine finger movements, dysgraphaesthesia on sensory testing, and a manneristic gripping handshake. There were no extrapyramidal brain CT, axial section: dense calcific deposits in the basal ganglia, thalamus, and orbitofrontal cortex consistent with Fahr’s disease.
symptoms. His IQ score was in the low range (WAIS-C=85 at the age of 13; Barbeau-Pinar=82 at the age of 17). He also presented an impairment on the Tower of London test, which measures executive function, and in a task assessing the understanding of others’ intentions. These two findings are reliably present in pervasive developmental disorders, in this IQ range. In addition, his performance on the Tower of Toronto test disclosed impaired performance in procedural learning. Psychiatric assessment showed scores above the cut off for autism according to the autism diagnostic interview (ADI), a standardised interview that requires specific training and those administering it to have a 0.90 reliability with other researchers. The subject was positive for the diagnosis of autism, being above cut off values in the three relevant areas of communication, social interactions, restricted interests, and repetitive behaviours. Nevertheless, he did not present delay in language acquisition or morphological atypicalities in language development, which corresponds to DSM-IV criteria for Asperger’s syndrome.

Brain CT showed dense calcium deposits in the basal ganglia, thalamus, cerebellar dentate nucleus, and orbitofrontal cortex, consistent with Fahr’s disease (figure). Spectral CT showed increased activity in basal ganglia relative to the cerebral cortex. A fine banded karyotype was normal. Serum calcium was 1.55 mM (normal 2.15–2.55 mM), phosphate 1.69 mM (normal 0.70–1.34 mM/l); urinary calcium was 0.8 mM (normal 2.5–6.3 mM); serum parathyroid hormone was below 0.6 (normal 1.0–6.55 µM), and a nuclear scan of the parathyroid glands showed an absence of activity. With a combination of vitamin D3-calcium supplementation and cognitive-behavioural therapy, serum calcium, and phosphate concentrations normalised and his behaviour improved marginally.

Asperger’s syndrome is a subtype of pervasive developmental disorder of unknown aetiology. Evidence for involvement of specific brain regions in pervasive developmental disorder are scarce and inconclusive.1 Although the tempo-occipital region is the most often involved in pervasive developmental disorders2 abnormal functioning of the frontal lobe is also suspected from replicated findings of executive function deficits and from occasional findings of frontal hypometabolism or abnormal macroscopic brain morphology.3 Abnormal cell counts and morphologies in the cerebellar hemispheres have also been reported, but the relation of these findings to autism is controversial.4

Fahr’s disease consists of symmetrical calcifications, located mainly in the basal forebrain and cerebellum, which are of various astrocytes. Cognitive and behavioural abnormalities may be present when calcifications occur early in development. A fortuitous association between pervasive developmental disorder and hypocalcemia, given the paucity of published cases, is plausible in the presented patient. Nevertheless, our case suggests that abnormal phospho-calcium metabolism could produce an autistic syndrome when brain calcifications cause specific neuropsychological deficits, due to their localisation. For example, errors of social judgement may be related to calcifications of the orbitofrontal cortex, whereas dysfunction of frontal-basal ganglia circuits may contribute to repetitive and ritualistic activities. Additionally, developmental lesions of the basal ganglia and cerebellum may contribute to the abnormalities of sensory attention, procedural learning, and motor intention in this patient.

The finding that the clinical picture of autism can be found in a wide range of medical conditions giving rise to organic brain dysfunction is not new, but the relation between these conditions and autism are often considered meaningless.5 By contrast, this case, similarly to some others6 suggests that dysfunction in key brain circuits may result in behavioural and cognitive abnormalities currently indistinguishable from idiopathic pervasive developmental disorder. This case also suggests that careful biological assessment of this group of patients may disclose focal brain lesions associated with identifiable cognitive deficits. Could these clinical coincidences be instructive for a neurodevelopmental model of autism?

**Hypertrrophic atlantoaxial ligaments: an unusual cause of compression of the upper spinal cord**

The craniovertebral junction can be affected by several pseudotumorous masses extradurally located, such as rheumatoid panus, hypertrophic non-union of odontoid fracture, post-traumatic cicatrix, synovial cysts, tumorous calcium pyrophosphate dihydrate crystal deposition, tophaceous gout, calcification of the posterior longitudinal ligament, synovial disease-like pigmented villonodular synovitis, and synovial chondromatosis.7 Hypertrophy of the atlantoaxial ligaments as a consequence of degenerative disease was recently recognised as an individual entity. Only five previous cases have been published.8 We add another case to the short series available in the literature, emphasising that as the cause of the spinal cord compression is amenable to surgical removal, symptomatic patients should be diagnosed and treated without delay.

A 66 year old woman presented with a rapid development of progressive spastic tetraparesis and an unremarkable medical history. There was no osteolysis or instability on plain cervical radiography and C.T. A bone scan with 99mTc was unremarkable. Magnetic resonance imaging showed a retro-odontoid extradural mass that was homogeneous and isointense on T1 weighted signal, demarcated no enhancement after intravenous gadolinium contrast, and was compressing the upper cervical spinal cord (figure). The laboratory tests were normal, confirming the absence of rheumatoid arthritis, metabolic disease, or gout. Surgical removal via a transoral approach with a minimal bony resection was direct and provided sufficient space to obtain spinal cord decompression. It was followed by a posterior C1-C2 fusion. Macroscopically, the lesion had no capsule and resembled a hypertrophic ligamentum flavum. Microscopically, it was non-inflamatory, hypocellular, and ligamentary pieces found within the mass appeared fibrous and almost disintegrated. The patient regained normal neurological function. Over a 3 year follow up period there was no recurrence.

We focus attention on hypertrophic atlantoaxial ligamentary disease as a degenerative disease that must be considered within the possible causes of high spinal cord compression.

**Preoperative sagittal T1 weighted MRI of the cervical spine with gadolinium enhancement. A retro-odontoid and extradural mass displacing the spinal cord is seen at the craniovertebral junction.**
Selective hemihypaesthesia due to tentorial coup injury against dorsolateral midbrain: potential cause of sensory impairment after closed head injury

A 63 year old woman who fell off her bicycle had a left temporal region head injury with evidence of initial loss of consciousness of 5 minutes and scalp excoriation of that area. On arrival at our hospital 30 minutes later she was alert and oriented. Cranial nerve functions, including extraocular motion and hearing function, were preserved. Pain and temperature sensations of the right side, including her face, showed a 70% decrease compared with the left side; however, position and vibration sensations were normal. Other neurological examinations, including motor function, coordination, and deep tendon reflexes, were normal. The patient’s only complaints were left temporal headache and right hemihypaesthesia.

Brain CT on admission showed a discrete and linear high density at the left ambient cistern without other intracranial lesions. On the next day CT showed an obscure low density lesion at the dorsolateral midbrain in addition to the previous lesion (figure).

Brain MRI, taken 3 days later, demonstrated an intraparenchymal lesion, at the surface of the left dorsolateral midbrain in high intensity on a T2 weighted image. The high intensity lesion corresponding to hematoma on CT was seen in the ambient cistern (figure). Taking both CT scans and MRI into consideration, this case was diagnosed as traumatic midbrain contusion.

The loss of pain and temperature sensation improved gradually and the patient was discharged 2 weeks later.

T2 weighted images 1 month later showed a more localized lesion in the same area. The coronal slices showed a high intensity lesion at the level of lower midbrain coinciding with the tentorial edge, disclosed as a low line between the occipital lobe and the cerebellar hemisphere (figure).

The neurological deficits almost disappeared 6 months later.

Somatosensory impairment including pain is one of the most common complaints among patients with craniocebral injury. Responsible lesions for sensory impairment, detectable by neuroimaging studies, almost always accompany associated neurological deficits. To our knowledge, a selective injury at the spinothalamic or trigeminothalamic tracts due to closed head injury has not been highlighted in the neurological literature.

The MR images in our case showed a discrete lesion at the left dorsolateral midbrain. The topographical anatomy of this tentorial coup injury. This injury is not rare in patients with severe head injury, accompanied by other intracranial lesions, and is often caused by lateral displacement of the brainstem relative to the tentorium. It is influenced by congenital variation in the size and shape of the tentorial incisura. The brain stem of the patient with a narrow incisura is more vulnerable to the direct contusive effects than that of a patient with a wider incisura. Therefore, even in minor head injury, this mechanism may occur in patients preconditioned with narrow tentorial incisura, which may have been the case in our patient.

The concept of tentorial coup injury against the midbrain is not new. It usually accompanies various degrees of conscious disturbance and other long tract signs, sensory deficits as well as cerebellar and cranial nerve palsy due to the midbrain lesion or other associated intracranial lesions. The clinical manifestation of our patient may represent one of the mildest forms of the midbrain contusion. Therefore, when we see a patient with post-traumatic sensory deficit, the possibility of this traumatic lesion or other associated intracranial lesions.
Toluene induced postural tremor

We read with interest the article by Miyagi et al. and comment on the medical treatment of toluene induced tremor. Microdialysis experiments in rats have shown that inhalation of toluene increases extracellular γ-aminobutyric acid (GABA) concentrations within the cerebellar cortex which probably explains why GABA agonists including benzodiazepines (for example, clonazepam) are not very effective in toluene induced tremor and ataxia. Rat experiments also showed a 50% reduction in brain catecholaminergic neurons. Degeneration of certain cerebellar pathways is probably responsible for the loss of this dopaminergic innervation. Dopamine agonists could therefore be of potential interest in the treatment of toluene induced tremor. This hypothesis was explored in a recently described case, which showed remarkable clinical and iconographic similarities with that described by Miyagi et al.: (a) long history of chronic toluene inhalation, (b) marked postural tremor, (c) progressive worsening of the symptoms despite abstinence from inhalant use, and (d) mild cerebral atrophy and marked low signal intensity in globus pallidi, thalami, red nuclei, and substantia nigrae on T2 weighted MRI. As such, the cases resemble patients with chronic toluene abuse who have a hyperprolactinemia and an amantadine hydrochloride. Tremor induced by toluene misuse successfully treated by a Vim thalamotomy. J Neurol Neurosurg Psychiatry 1999;66:704–6.

Early diagnosis of subependymal giant cell astrocytoma in children with tuberous sclerosis

Nabbout et al. have attempted to identify the risk factors for the progression of subependymal nodules into giant cell astrocytomas (SEGAs) in tuberous sclerosis complex. In attempting to develop screening strategies that avoid iatrogenic morbidity, patient inconvenience, and excess cost, it is essential that the natural history of these lesions in the general population of patients with tuberous sclerosis complex be understood well.

We think that there are two problems with this study that should make the physician cautious about any factors identified by Nabbout et al. as a basis for a screening programme. The first is that this study was performed in a population that had been referred to a tertiary medical centre, and then had been further selected by virtue of having had at least 3 years tertiary centre follow up and needing two MR scans of the head. The prevalence of astrocytomas and risk factors, and hence the positive predictive value of any screening test in a general population of patients with tuberous sclerosis complex is likely to be different from those described in the highly selected group studied in this paper. The second issue is that the authors have made a potentially misleading decision to exclude more than half their study sample because they do not have lesions close to the foramen of Monroe. It is not certain that all SEGAs arise from lesions close to the foramen. They may arise in the fourth ventricle. Furthermore, the late presentation of many lesions in the lateral ventricles has, in the past, precluded accurate determination of their point of origin. For example, this study selects 24 of 60 patients who had met their entry criteria but does not state how many of the excluded 36 patients had no subependymal nodules or nodules that were not “near the foramen of Monroe”. It is also not clear what constitutes proximity to the foramen. The authors were apparently not blinded at the point when they selected which patients had lesions near to the foramen and therefore there is an obvious issue of potential selection bias.

The consequence of excluding these patients may have been that false significance is given to their results. The data they present are fragile. Consider, for example, the consequence of including from these 36 non-selected patients a hypothetical single case that had a family history of tuberous sclerosis complex and a subependymal nodule which enhanced with gadolinium. The effect would be to remove the stated statistical significance (using Fisher’s exact test) between the outcome and both of these explanatory variables.

Identifying the risk factors that can tell us which subependymal lesions will become invasive is important. As subependymal nodules and SEGAs seem to be histologically identical it is unlikely that pathologists will provide an answer. The study of Nabbout et al. suggests some new hypotheses which might attract others. However, the definitive answer will not be provided by studies of selected samples but by follow up of a population based sample of patients with tuberous sclerosis complex. In the absence of such a study we would be cautious about implementing screening programmes based on what may be misleading criteria.

**Toluene induced postural tremor**

We read with interest the article by Miyagi et al. and comment on the medical treatment of toluene induced tremor. Microdialysis experiments in rats have shown that inhalation of toluene increases extracellular γ-aminobutyric acid (GABA) concentrations within the cerebellar cortex which probably explains why GABA agonists including benzodiazepines (for example, clonazepam) are not very effective in toluene induced tremor and ataxia. Rat experiments also showed a 50% reduction in brain catecholaminergic neurons. Degeneration of certain cerebellar pathways is probably responsible for the loss of this dopaminergic innervation. Dopamine agonists could therefore be of potential interest in the treatment of toluene induced tremor. This hypothesis was explored in a recently described case, which showed remarkable clinical and iconographic similarities with that described by Miyagi et al.: (a) long history of chronic toluene inhalation, (b) marked postural tremor, (c) progressive worsening of the symptoms despite abstinence from inhalant use, and (d) mild cerebral atrophy and marked low signal intensity in globus pallidi, thalami, red nuclei, and substantia nigrae on T2 weighted MRI. As such, the cases resemble patients with chronic toluene abuse who have a hyperprolactinemia and an amantadine hydrochloride. Tremor induced by toluene misuse successfully treated by a Vim thalamotomy. J Neurol Neurosurg Psychiatry 1999;66:704–6.

**Early diagnosis of subependymal giant cell astrocytoma in children with tuberous sclerosis**

Nabbout et al. have attempted to identify the risk factors for the progression of subependymal nodules into giant cell astrocytomas (SEGAs) in tuberous sclerosis complex. In attempting to develop screening strategies that avoid iatrogenic morbidity, patient inconvenience, and excess cost, it is essential that the natural history of these lesions in the general population of patients with tuberous sclerosis complex be understood well.

We think that there are two problems with this study that should make the physician cautious about any factors identified by Nabbout et al. as a basis for a screening programme. The first is that this study was performed in a population that had been referred to a tertiary medical centre, and then had been further selected by virtue of having had at least 3 years tertiary centre follow up and needing two MR scans of the head. The prevalence of astrocytomas and risk factors, and hence the positive predictive value of any screening test in a general population of patients with tuberous sclerosis complex is likely to be different from those described in the highly selected group studied in this paper. The second issue is that the authors have made a potentially misleading decision to exclude more than half their study sample because they do not have lesions close to the foramen of Monroe. It is not certain that all SEGAs arise from lesions close to the foramen. They may arise in the fourth ventricle. Furthermore, the late presentation of many lesions in the lateral ventricles has, in the past, precluded accurate determination of their point of origin. For example, this study selects 24 of 60 patients who had met their entry criteria but does not state how many of the excluded 36 patients had no subependymal nodules or nodules that were not “near the foramen of Monroe”. It is also not clear what constitutes proximity to the foramen. The authors were apparently not blinded at the point when they selected which patients had lesions near to the foramen and therefore there is an obvious issue of potential selection bias.

The consequence of excluding these patients may have been that false significance is given to their results. The data they present are fragile. Consider, for example, the consequence of including from these 36 non-selected patients a hypothetical single case that had a family history of tuberous sclerosis complex and a subependymal nodule which enhanced with gadolinium. The effect would be to remove the stated statistical significance (using Fisher’s exact test) between the outcome and both of these explanatory variables.

Identifying the risk factors that can tell us which subependymal lesions will become invasive is important. As subependymal nodules and SEGAs seem to be histologically identical it is unlikely that pathologists will provide an answer. The study of Nabbout et al. suggests some new hypotheses which might attract others. However, the definitive answer will not be provided by studies of selected samples but by follow up of a population based sample of patients with tuberous sclerosis complex. In the absence of such a study we would be cautious about implementing screening programmes based on what may be misleading criteria.

**Correspondence**

JOHN OSBORNE

Andrew Lux

Bath Unit for Research in Paediatrics, Royal United Hospital, Bath BA1 3NG, United Kingdom

Correspondence to: Dr Finbar J K O’Callaghan, Bath Unit for Research in Paediatrics, Royal United Hospital, Bath BA1 3NG, United Kingdom


We read with interest the article by Sasaki et al. concerning the atypical form of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS). The pattern of muscular atrophy in these patients differed from that of typical ALS in that severe muscle involvement was confined to the upper limbs, predominantly the proximal portion and shoulder girdle, sparing the face and the legs until late in the disease’s course or until the terminal stage.

Over the past few years, we have noticed a growing interest in the renaming of this clinical form of ALS, which has its origins and predomination in the proximal muscles and upper limbs and little or no effect of either a bulbar nature or in the lower limbs. Thus Hu et al. coined the term familial amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (SALS). The pattern of muscular atrophy in these patients differed from that of typical ALS in that severe muscle involvement was confined to the upper limbs, predominantly the proximal portion and shoulder girdle, sparing the face and the legs until late in the disease’s course or until the terminal stage.

Recently, along these lines, Katz et al. described a series of patients affected by ALS that predominantly showed signs of lower motor neuron disease in the upper limbs, without significant functional involvement of other regions on clinical presentation. This subgroup of patients was clinically characterised by the display of progressive atrophy and weakness affecting the proximal muscles in the upper limb muscles in a more or less symmetric manner.

Other terms used in the past to refer to this form of ALS have been dangling arm syndrome, suspended form, orangutan sign, dead arm sign, bibrachial palsy, rizomelic amyotrophy, and the idea of naming it a distinctive phenotype of a neurogenic...
Correspondence to: Correspondence to: Dr Josep GaneZ, Servei de Neurologia, Hospital Clinic, Universitari Vall d'Hebron, Passeig Vall d'Hebron 119–135, 08035 Barcelona, Spain; email: 12784ajc@cs.com


**Isolated dysarthria**

We read with interest the article by Urban et al. Using transcranial magnetic stimulation, the authors demonstrated electrophysiologically evidence for a central monoparesis of the tongue in patients with isolated dysarthria from corticospinal tract lesions. As in their patients transcranial magnetic stimulation induced absent or delayed corticalcortical responses at the tongue, the authors ascribed isolated dysarthria to interruption of the corticobulbar pathways involved, involving the thalamocortical and corticostriatal fibres as well as the corticobulbar fibres. In fact, lacunar infarctions around the internal capsule–corona radiata are likely to underlie this ascending and descending pathway lesion.

To assess corticopontocerebellar tract function, Urban et al investigated cerebellar blood flow in patients with isolated dysarthria using HMPAO-SPECT. The authors concluded that the corticopontocerebellar tract is preserved in isolated dysarthria because of lack of evidence for cerebellar diaschisis on SPECT. Their SPECT findings on cerebellar blood flow were similar to our results. However, we wonder whether cerebral cortical blood flow was preserved in their patients, because our SPECT study suggested frontal cortical dysfunction as an underlying mechanism of isolated dysarthria. Lingual paresis and connections with cerebral language areas, resulting in dysfunction of these cortices, therefore, we postulated that isolated dysarthria results from interruption of cortico-subcortical networks indispensable for speech output, involving the thalamocortical and corticostriatal fibres as well as the corticobulbar fibres. In fact, lacunar infarctions around the internal capsule–corona radiata are likely to underlie this ascending and descending pathway lesion.

As in their patients transcranial magnetic stimulation induced absent or delayed corticalcortical responses at the tongue, the authors ascribed isolated dysarthria to interruption of the corticobulbar pathways involved, involving the thalamocortical and corticostriatal fibres as well as the corticobulbar fibres. In fact, lacunar infarctions around the internal capsule–corona radiata are likely to underlie this ascending and descending pathway lesion.


Urban et al reply:

Okuda et al draw attention to their article on pure dysarthria in *Stroke* which we read with much interest. They refer to 12 patients with pure dysarthria, 11 of whom showed multiple bilateral infarctions involving the internal capsule and corona radiata. The main difference to our series of seven patients is the multiple involvement of the brain. We think the single lesion we collected by use of a more appropriate test to correlate lesion topography with impaired function. The findings of Okuda et al are in line with our conclusion that interruption of the corticofugal pathway is important in the pathogenesis of dysarthria of extracebellar origin. Obviously, impairment of the corticofugal tract of one hemisphere by a single small lesion is an adequate condition for dysarthria. The patients of Okuda et al may be due to infarction in other parts of the brain compared with the lesion causing pure dysarthria.

P P URBAN
S WICH'T
H CH HOPF
Department of Neurology, University of Erlangen
Langebenstrasse 1, D53101 Mainz, Germany

S FLEISCHER
Department of Communication Disorders
O NICKEL
Department of Nuclear Medicine


Motor cortical excitability in Huntington's disease

We read with great interest the paper of Hanajima et al reporting that intracortical inhibition of the motor cortex is normal in patients with chorea of various origins. At variance with the results we previously found, a reduced intracortical inhibition in a group of patients with genetically confirmed Huntington's disease. Hanajima et al suggest that the discrepancies between the two studies may be due to an inadequate patient selection as they included patients with early stage Huntington's disease to “study the pathophysiology of chorea unaffected by other disorders movement.” They postulated that we, because of the reported correlation with a dystonic rating scale, had a more advanced stage of the disease possibly with coexisting dystonia or rigidity. These assertions deserve some comments.

The mean disease duration of our nine patients with Huntington's disease was 6.2 (4.1) years which is actually shorter than the duration of the six patients reported by Hanajima et al (8.3 (5.9) years). Most of our patients could be considered in an early stage of the disease, the Unified Huntington's disease rating scale, and none presented dystonia, rigidity, or any other additional movement disorder. In this regard, however, it should be pointed out that bradykinesia is often associated with chorea in patients with Huntington's disease and may even precede the appearance of choreic dyskinesias.4 Chorea itself is often reduced in the more advanced Huntington's disease stages.5 It is unlikely, therefore, that any neurophysiological approach can test purely chorea even in the early Huntington's disease stages. In addition, different mechanisms are involved in Huntington's disease and other choreas as suggested by the lack of impairment of somatosensory evoked responses and long latency stretch reflexes in the second.6

We were not really surprised at the results of Hanajima et al as we share their opinion that patients with Huntington's disease may be characterised by large individual differences in the involvement of motor cortical areas. Actually, these patients in our study showed an amount of intracortical inhibition within the confidence limits of the control population. We also think that the impairment of intracortical inhibition is likely to develop during the course of the disease as we did not find any change in four patients, two of them already reported,7 with positive DNA testing but completely asymptomatic.

The discrepancies between the two studies are more likely to be explained, at least in part, by some methodological differences. For instance, the amplitude of the control response was larger in our series (approximately 1.0 mV compared with 0.3 mV in the study of Hanajima et al). This may induce a different sensitivity of the test, and the amount of intracortical inhibition in our normal controls is greater (see also) than in the study of Hanajima et al.

When interpreting the results of studies with paired transcranial magnetic stimulation pathophysiological it should be kept in mind that similar changes of intracortical inhibition have been shown in patients with various movement disorders (focal dystonia, myoclonus, parkinsonism, restless legs syndrome, Tourette's disorder), but also in different diseases such as amyotrophic lateral sclerosis.8 We think, therefore, that the impairment of intracortical inhibition cannot be regarded as the marker of a specific pathophysiological mechanism, but is likely to reflect a non-specific imbalance of inhibitory and facilitatory circuits within the motor cortex.


The authors reply:

We have been criticized by the response of Abbuzzese et al to our paper. We completely agree with their opinions.

The discrepancy between the two studies2 may not be mainly due to the different stage of the disease between the two groups of patients. Although the duration of the disease is one factor to judge the disease stage, the severity of the disease (stage of the disease) is also positively correlated with CAG repeat number.

We may have to take CAG repeat number into consideration in comparisons. Unfortunately, however, we have no way to do such comparisons between these two studies. We could say, at least, that the intracortical inhibition was normal even at the same stage of the disease as that of the patients of Abbuzzese et al, if studied with our method.

We also consider that methodological differences are very important in paired magnetic stimulation. The results strongly depend on the intensities of both a conditioning and a test stimulus. Especially, the intensity of the conditioning stimulus is critical. We have no difficulty in showing normal inhibition, but have much difficulty in showing reduced or absent inhibition because of such marked dependence of the results on the intensities of stimulation. Therefore, we used 80% of the resting threshold as a conditioning stimulus before we confirmed inhibition in studies of patients.3 We used an intensity of 5% less than the active threshold as a conditioning stimulus in the study of chorea.3 We did not need to change the intensity of the conditioning stimulus because we always obtained a normal inhibition with this intensity. We consider that this is very important. If using a suprathreshold (active threshold) conditioning stimulus, a facilitatory effect must often superimpose on the intracortical inhibition. This makes the interpretation difficult. Was the intensity of 80% of the resting threshold below the active threshold in their patients? In our experience, 80% of the resting threshold was sometimes above the active threshold. These factors must be considered in interpreting the results of paired magnetic stimulation.

Such a methodological problem is inherent in human studies because we have no direct way of detecting the threshold of the motor cortex. Our two results must be true. We may have two completely different interpretations of these results. (1) The intracortical inhibition is normal in Huntington's disease. Abbuzzese et al showed the reduced inhibition because they used a high intensity conditioning stimulus with which the degree of the
intracortical inhibition is often decreased even in normal subjects. The 80% of the threshold for relaxed muscles must correspond to different values relative to the threshold for active muscles in patients from that in normal subjects. (2) The intracortical inhibition is disturbed in Huntington's disease. This slight abnormality could be detected with their method but not with ours because their method has better sensitivity in detecting an abnormality than ours. Whether it is true, the intracortical inhibition must be normal or slightly disturbed in Huntington's disease.

R HANAJIMA
Y UGAWA
Department of Neurology, Division of Neuroscience, Graduate School of Medicine, University of Tokyo, 7–3–1 Hongo, Bunkyo-ku, Tokyo 113–8655, Japan

Critical closing pressure: a valid concept?

Czosnyka et al recently published a study investigating the clinical significance of critical closing pressure (CCP) estimates in patients with head injury. We agree with their theoretical formulation of CCP concept and with the interpretation of their results.

Firstly, the physiological meaning of both formulae of CCP presented (CCP1 and CCP2, respectively) is questionable. The implication of both presented equations is that the instantaneous value of cerebral blood flow velocity (FV)(t) at a given moment is equal to arterial blood pressure at the given time (ABP(t)) minus the mean pressure divided by cerebrovascular resistance (CVR):

\[
FV(t) = \frac{ABP(t) - CCP}{CVR}
\]

(1)

At the time of systolic and diastolic pressure peaks (ABP, ABPd, respectively), it follows that systolic and diastolic flow velocities (FVs, FVd) should be equal to (ABPs−CCP)/CVR and (ABPd−CCP)/CVR, respectively. However, it is well known that the vascular resistance valid for the static pressure/flow connection (CVR0), concerning mean pressures and flows, is different from and in general much higher than resistances determining dynamic pressure/flow relations (CVR1) as in the case of pulsatile pressures. Therefore, equation 1 cannot be applied to describe dynamic flow. This can be best illustrated using the frequency domain approach (FV=mean flow velocity; FV=mean flow velocity; A1=amplitude of the pulsatile pressure wave; F1=amplitude of the pulsatile flow wave):

\[
FV(t) = A_{BP-CCP}/CVR0 \times F1/A1/CVR1
\]

(2)

Inserting equations 2 and 3 into the frequency domain equation for CCP2 of the authors:

\[
CCP2 = ABP−A1/F1 \times FV
\]

(4)

leads to

\[
CCP2 = ABP−CVR1/CVR0 \times (ABP−CCP) = ABP−(1−CVR1/CVR0) \times CVP/CVR0
\]

(5)

Obviously CCP2 is only in the case of CVR1=CVR0 equal to CCP. Under the more realistic assumption that CVR1 is equal to about half of CVR0 it follows for CCP2:

\[
CCP2 = 0.5ABP + 0.5CCP
\]

(6)

With decreasing CVR1/CVR0 ratios, CCP2 becomes more and more dependent on ABP and independent of CCP. In any case, without exact knowledge of the CVR1/CVR0 ratio, equation 4 is useless for a valid CCP calculation.

The second criticism concerns the correlation of the calculated mean ABP found by the authors (r=0.5; p<0.05). According to the original idea of Burton, CCP represents a certain mean ABP value below which small vessels begin to collapse. CCP should therefore be a constant value independent of the actual ABP. On the other hand, this significant correlation can be explained by our equation 5, again indicating the missing physiological basis of the CCP concept of the authors.

Thirdly, it seems doubtful that CCP could be estimated using pressure and flow values from ABP ranges clearly above CCP and flow values clearly above zero flow, respectively. As long as small vessels do not collapse (ABP>CCP) it is not possible to deduce whether their actual wall tension is determined more by transmural pressure or by active vasoconstriction. However, the relative contribution of both effects is critical for the limit of CCP.

Finally, I would be interested in the authors’ explanation of negative diastolic flow velocities as seen in Doppler spectrogram with high vascular resistance (peripheral arteries, middle cerebral artery during strong hypocapnia). In the case of ABP<CCP and a small vessel collapse according to the model of the authors, CVR should increase towards FV and FVd towards zero (equation 1). Negative flow velocities could, consequently, not occur.

I suggest that the relation between pulsatile pressure and flow should be better described using the concept of different static and dynamic resistances (CVR0 and CVR1). The driving pressure of the mean flow is more accurately given by cerebral perfusion pressure (CPP=ABP−ICP) than by ABP−CCP. Therefore, equation 2 changes to:

\[
FV = (ABP−ICP)/CVR0
\]

(6)

and equation 5 to

\[
CCP2 = ABP−1−CVR1/CVR0 + CVR1/CVR0−ICP
\]

(7)

Equation 7 explains well the positive correlations found between CCP2 and ABP and between CCP2 and ICP, respectively, without assuming a connection between CCP2 and Burton’s concept of “critical closing pressure”.

Rolf R Diehl
Department of Neurology, Krupp Hospital, Alfred-Krupp-Straße, 45117 Essen, Germany


Czosnyka et al reply:

We thank Diehl very much for the interesting letter presenting some mathematical considerations about cerebral haemodynamics. We need to emphasise that our primary intention was to investigate Burton’s hypothesis in patients with head injury that critical closing pressure (CCP) may be represented by a sum of intracranial pressure (ICP) and the tension in the arterial walls.

CCP=ICP+active tension of arterial walls

Aaslid proposed the mathematical formula taken for calculations:

\[
CCP = ABP−ABP_{ppp} + FV_{ppp}/FV_{ppp} = ABP_{ppp} + FV_{ppp}/FV_{ppp}
\]

(8)

(where ABP and FV are mean values of arterial pressure and MCA flow velocity, ABPp and FVp are systolic values, ABP_{ppp} and FV_{ppp} are peak to peak amplitudes). A graphical interpretation of formula (8) has been given in fig 1. CCP is an x intercept point of linear regression between subsequent systolic and diastolic values recorded within 6 second intervals of flow velocity (along y axis) and arterial pressure (along x axis).

In fact, the formula proposed by Michel et al is very similar. The only difference is that instead of the original waveforms of FV and ABP, first (fundamental) harmonic components were taken for the same graphical construction—that is:

\[
CCP = ABP−A1/F1 \times FV
\]

(9)

In our paper we confirmed empirically that both CCP1 and CCP2 produced the same values in a group of patients after head injury, therefore the mathematical consideration of Dickh (equations 1–5) must contain an error!

First of all we cannot see how equation (1) from Diehl’s letter can be derived from any of our formulae. Everyone who has tried to plot momentary values from ABP pulse waveform against momentary values of FV waveform knows that it never plots a straight line (equation (1) implies), but forms “clouds” of systolic and diastolic values of ABP and FV waveforms (fig 1 in’ one can rather see an ellipsoidal shape which is very seldom regular enough to be approximated by a straight section. Therefore, equation (1) in Diehl’s letter is not correct. In fact, CVR is a frequency dependent variable (represents vascular impedance) and if a linear theory can be applied, division in (1) should be substituted by a convolution with an inverse Fourier transform of “cerebrovascular admittance”.

Definition of CVR0 as FV/(ABP−CCP) is completely artificial and lacks a physiological basis. It is rather taken from the geometrical interpretation of figure 1 in’ . In our material equivalent of parameter CVR0 (as defined by Diehl) is 1.007 (SD 0.31) and CVR1 0.972 (SD 0.29), the difference between them was not statistically significant. Therefore, the suggestion that the CVR1/CVR0 ratio is 0.5 is not correct. Real CVR0 should be calculated as (ABP−ICP)/FV. We fully agree that equation (5) proposed by Diehl is “useless for valid CCP calculation”. We have not used it and have never suggested anyone could do so.

The second criticism was that our CCP positively correlated with ICP. In our paper we suggested a surprise. When ABP decreases, vasodilatation occurs and arterial wall tension decreases. Therefore presuming ICP was constant, CCP should decrease. A rather weak (though significant) correlation suggests that not all of our patients were pressure reactive or ICP was not always constant.

The final issue concerning negative flow velocities is a trap Diehl has prepared for himself. We never suggested that any factor interpretable as cerebrovascular resistance (CVR0 or CVR1) should be involved in the concept of critical closing pressure. From the definition, closing is a strongly non-linear phenomenon, therefore applying linear theory here is very
Correspondence to: Dr Marek Czosnyka

MAREK CZOSNYKA
PIOTR SMELEWSKI
STEFAN PIECHNICK
Academic Neurosurgical Unit, Box 167, Addenbrooke’s
Hospital, Cambridge CB2 2QQ, UK

Correspondence to: Dr Marek Czosnyka
email MC144@MEDSCHL,CAM.AC.UK

1 Czosnyka M, SMELEWSKI P, Piechnik S, et al. “Critical closing pressure in cerebral vascular circu-
4 Michel E, Hillebrand S, von Twickel J, et al. “Frequency dependence of cerebral vascular im-

High frequency stimulation of the subthalamic nucleus and levodopa induced dyskinesias in Parkinson’s disease

Reduction in the neuronal activity of the sub-
thalamic nucleus leading to diminished exci-
tation of the globus pallidum internum is asso-
ciated with chorea–ballism in monkeys.1 Levodopa induced dyskinesias are currently thought to share a similar pathophysiology2 but recent findings also suggest that abnor-
mal patterns of neuronal firing in the globus pallidum internum may be relevant.3 Data from both parkinsonian monkeys and patients with Parkinson’s disease submitted from both parkinsonian monkeys and patients with Parkinson’s disease have been associated with chorea–ballism in monkeys.1 Levodopa induced dyskinesias are currently thought to share a similar pathophysiology2 but recent findings also suggest that abnor-
mal patterns of neuronal firing in the globus pallidum internum may be relevant.3 Data from both parkinsonian monkeys and patients with Parkinson’s disease submitted from both parkinsonian monkeys and patients with Parkinson’s disease have been associated with chorea–ballism in monkeys.1 Levodopa induced dyskinesias are currently thought to share a similar pathophysiology2 but recent findings also suggest that abnor-
mal patterns of neuronal firing in the globus pallidum internum may be relevant.3 Data from both parkinsonian monkeys and patients with Parkinson’s disease submitted from both parkinsonian monkeys and patients with Parkinson’s disease have been associated with chorea–ballism in monkeys.1 Levodopa induced dyskinesias are currently thought to share a similar pathophysiology2 but recent findings also suggest that abnor-
mal patterns of neuronal firing in the globus pallidum internum may be relevant.3 Data from both parkinsonian monkeys and patients with Parkinson’s disease submitted from both parkinsonian monkeys and patients with Parkinson’s disease have been associated with chorea–ballism in monkeys.1 Levodopa induced dyskinesias are currently thought to share a similar pathophysiology2 but recent findings also suggest that abnor-
mal patterns of neuronal firing in the globus pallidum internum may be relevant.3 Data from both parkinsonian monkeys and patients with Parkinson’s disease submitted from both parkinsonian monkeys and patients with Parkinson’s disease have been associated with chorea–ballism in monkeys.1 Levodopa induced dyskinesias are currently thought to share a similar pathophysiology2 but recent findings also suggest that abnor-
mal patterns of neuronal firing in the globus pallidum internum may be relevant.3 Data from both parkinsonian monkeys and patients with Parkinson’s disease submitted from both parkinsonian monkeys and patients with Parkinson’s disease have been associated with chorea–ballism in monkeys.1 Levodopa induced dyskinesias are currently thought to share a similar pathophysiology2 but recent findings also suggest that abnor-
mal patterns of neuronal firing in the globus pallidum internum may be relevant.3 Data from both parkinsonian monkeys and patients with Parkinson’s disease submitted from both parkinsonian monkeys and patients with Parkinson’s disease have been associated with chorea–ballism in monkeys.1 Levodopa induced dyskinesias are currently thought to share a similar pathophysiology2 but recent findings also suggest that abnor-
mal patterns of neuronal firing in the globus pallidum internum may be relevant.3 Data from both parkinsonian monkeys and patients with Parkinson’s disease submitted from both parkinsonian monkeys and patients with Parkinson’s disease have been associated with chorea–ballism in monkeys.1 Levodopa induced dyskinesias are currently thought to share a similar pathophysiology2 but recent findings also suggest that abnor-
mal patterns of neuronal firing in the globus pallidum internum may be relevant.3 Data from both parkinsonian monkeys and patients with Parkinson’s disease submitted from both parkinsonian monkeys and patients with Parkinson’s disease have been associated with chorea–ballism in monkeys.1 Levodopa induced dyskinesias are currently thought to share a similar pathophysiology2 but recent findings also suggest that abnor-
mal patterns of neuronal firing in the globus pallidum internum may be relevant.3 Data from both parkinsonian monkeys and patients with Parkinson’s disease submitted from both parkinsonian monkeys and patients with Parkinson’s disease have been associated with chorea–ballism in monkeys.1 Levodopa induced dyskinesias are currently thought to share a similar pathophysiology2 but recent findings also suggest that abnor-
mal patterns of neuronal firing in the globus pallidum internum may be relevant.3 Data from both parkinsonian monkeys and patients with Parkinson’s disease submitted from both parkinsonian monkeys and patients with Parkinson’s disease have been associated with chorea–ballism in monkeys.1 Levodopa induced dyskinesias are currently thought to share a similar pathophysiology2 but recent findings also suggest that abnor-
mal patterns of neuronal firing in the globus pallidum internum may be relevant.3

References

2 Crossman AR. A hypothesis on the pathophysiological mechanisms of levodopa or dopamine agonist-induced dyskinesia in Par-


Figueiras-Mendez et al reply

We thank Obeso et al for their comments regarding our recent report.1 In summary, they raised some interesting points which need further clarification.

Recognition of the electrical activity of the subthalamic nucleus was based on fulfilling criteria: (a) high frequency discharge (25 Hz or higher) within the nucleus1; (b) a tonic (regular), phasic (irregular) or a rhythmic pat-
tern of discharge; (c) response to voluntary/ passional movements.2,3 When rhythmic dis-
card were recorded irregular passive manipulations were performed or the patients asked to moved the limbs irregularly; (d) response to tremor activity. Positive cells were considered based on correlation with the EMG and the accelerometer re-
corded simultaneously. Artificial manual stop-
ing by one experimenter (confirmed by visual inspection, silence in the EMG, and stoppage in the oscillating accelerometer) and/or spontaneous arrest in the tremor modified the firing frequency and discharge pattern or rhythmic cells corroborating the tremor nature of the cells, (e) the activity of the cells above the subthalamic nucleus, (f) activity in the subthalamic nucleus and zona incerta with proper characteris-
tics; (g) a change in the background basal noise when entering the subtha-
lamic nucleus. A higher activity is observed (g) contrary is observed when entering the nucleus. A lower background noise level; (h) the activity of substantia nigra pars reticulata cells when further lowering the microelectric-
tode. These cells discharge at high frequency at regular intervals as identified in patients1 and primates.4 All these points were fulfilled by the patient reported.

Considering the questions in the letter by Obeso et al, we make the following com-
ments: (a) Action potentials of rhythmic dys-
kinesia are easily recognised from the rest of the recording cells, and are not very common. The recordings shown in the article have amplitudes less than 0.3 mV and could not be considered large amplitude potentials. We start to record activity from 3 mm before entering the subthalamic nucleus, traverse the length of the subthalamic nucleus, and go further down several mm to encounter substantia nigra pars reticulata cells. Changes in the background activity are clearly recogn-
ised and are higher when entering the subthalamic nucleus. Enough cells are re-
corded along the tracks experimented to recognize a large amplitude potential. The
Nitrile oxide in acute ischaemic stroke

The pivotal role of nitrile oxide (NO) in cerebral ischaemia has been elegantly highlighted in the recent editorial by O'Mahony and Kendall. Although studies of neuroprotective agents have been largely disappointing, pharmacological manipulation of NO may represent a novel means of protecting the brain from ischaemic insult. One area not discussed in the above referenced neuroprotective effect of 3-hydroxy-3-methylglutaryl coenzyme A reductase inhibitors or “statins” in cerebral ischaemia. Preliminary studies have shown that statins modulate brain nitrile oxide synthase activity in a neuroprotective manner. Data from a murine model of ischaemic stroke demonstrate that prophylactic statin therapy reduces infarct size by about 30%, and improves neurological outcome in normocholesterolaemic animals. In this investigation, statin therapy directly up regulated endothelial NO in the brain without altering expression of neuronal NO. Recent findings also suggest that statin therapy influences the activity of inducible NO. Lovastatin has been shown to inhibit cytokine mediated upregulation of inducible NO and production of NO in rat astrocytes and macrophages, and this inhibition may represent a novel means of suppressing inflammatory responses that accompany ischaemia. Most interestingly, these preliminary findings suggest that statin therapy may modify the friendly/unfriendly faces of brain NO in a synergistically neuroprotective manner. These and other vascular effects of statins in cerebral ischaemia are potentially of great importance in human neuroprotection and ongoing animal studies in the Amsterdam Prospective Study of Pravastatin in the Elderly at Risk (PROSPER) study will help clarify their role in human cerebrovascular disease.

CARL J VAUGHAN
Division of Cardiology, Department of Medicine, Weill Medical College of Cornell University, The New York Presbyterian Hospital, Starr 4, 525 E 68th Street, New York, New York 10021, USA
NORMAN DELANTY
Department of Neurology, Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA

Correspondence to: Dr Carl J Vaughan
email evaughan@nyhmed.cornell.edu


O'Mahony replies:
The comments of Vaughan and Delany draw attention to the evidence that statin therapy up regulates the activity of neuronal NO. Their contention is that statin therapy may be neuroprotective. Statins may indeed prevent strokes and reduce mortality. The pivotal role of nitric oxide (NO) in cerebral ischaemia has been elegantly highlighted in the recent editorial by O’Mahony and Kendall. Although studies of neuroprotective agents have been largely disappointing, pharmacological manipulation of NO may represent a novel means of protecting the brain from ischaemic insult. One area not discussed in the previous referenced neuroprotective effect of 3-hydroxy-3-methylglutaryl coenzyme A reductase inhibitors or “statins” in cerebral ischaemia. Preliminary studies have shown that statins modulate brain nitric oxide synthase activity in a neuroprotective manner. Data from a murine model of ischaemic stroke demonstrate that prophylactic statin therapy reduces infarct size by about 30%, and improves neurological outcome in normocholesterolaemic animals. In this investigation, statin therapy directly up regulated endothelial NO in the brain without altering expression of neuronal NO. Recent findings also suggest that statin therapy influences the activity of inducible NO. Lovastatin has been shown to inhibit cytokine mediated upregulation of inducible NO and production of NO in rat astrocytes and macrophages, and this inhibition may represent a novel means of suppressing inflammatory responses that accompany ischaemia. Most interestingly, these preliminary findings suggest that statin therapy may modify the friendly/unfriendly faces of brain NO in a synergistically neuroprotective manner. These and other vascular effects of statins in cerebral ischaemia are potentially of great importance in human neuroprotection and ongoing animal studies in the Amsterdam Prospective Study of Pravastatin in the Elderly at Risk (PROSPER) study will help clarify their role in human cerebrovascular disease.

DENIS O’MAHONY
Clinical Investigation Unit, Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Edgbaston, Birmingham B15 2TB, UK

BOOK REVIEWS


That neuroimmunology has come of age is demonstrated by the profusion of volumes published on the subject in recent years. This volume focuses on the central nervous system, and aims to satisfy the curiosity of both the clinician faced with a diagnostic conundrum and the experimental immunologist inquiring into the clinical relevance of his findings. At first sight it seems improbable that both of these goals might be achieved in one volume; this book however, succeeds admirably in what it sets out to do, as much as a result of its literary style as its content. The intrusive authorial voice fell into disfavour in literary circles around the turn of the century because it was thought that it called attention to the act of narrating which detracted from realistic illusion, so reducing the emotional intensity of what was being represented. It is a device much favoured by postmodern writers, who expose the nature of fictional constructs. The intrusive medical author never dropped out of fashion, although in these days of evidence based prejudice, authorial omniscience might be considered suspect. The authors of this volume are intrusive in a guiding conversational manner that makes this book by far the most readable of the neuroimmunological texts.

The book opens with a highly accessible chapter on immune responses and the nervous system. There follows a chapter that integrates the neurobiology of multiple sclerosis with contemporary issues of aetiology, cell injury, and repair. Next, a chapter on inflammatory demyelinating diseases examines syndromes of isolated demyelination, acute disseminated encephalomyelitis and allied conditions, and some of the syndromes of demyelination that are now accepted as part of the range of multiple sclerosis. The chapters on demyelinating disease are drawn to a close by a discussion of existing and experimental therapies for multiple sclerosis.

The book continues with chapters on paraneoplastic disorders of the CNS, stiff man syndrome, neurological complications of...
connective tissue disorders, organ specific autoimmunity, sarcoidosis, and cerebral vasculitis. Each chapter is an appropriate length and well referenced; the wood is always clearly visible between the trees. This book is sufficiently readable and small to be recommended as holiday reading. Its only drawback is that in making erudition so readily available, one risks being outshined yet again by one’s registrar.

JON SUSSMAN


As Alzheimer’s disease becomes of increasing importance to society, basic science research in this field needs to provide the building blocks for both therapeutic interventions and accurate diagnosis. This publication is a collection of papers presented at an international Alzheimer’s disease research meeting in Leipzig in 1997. This conference aimed to bring together both clinical and basic science disciplines and this is reflected in the papers selected for this book. There are 31 papers included, covering topics from early symptomatology and cognitive features to immunobiology and theoretical neuronal treatment strategies. The contributors to this book are some of the most authoritative in their field, predominantly based in Europe. Covering all aspects of Alzheimer’s disease research from the correct diagnosis to basic science approaches of treatment is ambitious for such a compact book (315 pages), and although the editors succeed in collecting an interesting series of papers around these themes, they make no claims to be comprehensive in their scope. The papers included range from empirical research reports to reviews of the current literature. The review papers are generally excellent, concise, clear, well referenced, and illustrated—for example, there are excellent reviews of Alzheimer’s disease with vascular pathology (Pasquier et al), and Lewy body disease (McKeith et al), great updates on neuropathology (Jellinger and Bancher, Braak et al), and several worthy reviews of treatment strategies for Alzheimer’s disease including NSAIDS (Möller), antioxidants, and radical scavengers (Rösler et al). I found the review by Reisberg et al on ontogenetic models in the understanding of the management of Alzheimer’s disease particularly interesting. However, the papers of original research are of more limited interest to the general reader. Although, as mentioned, the quality of illustrations is good, there is some variability in the definition of abbreviations and occasional lapses into other European languages.

Certainly, I think this book would be of value for investigators interested in the neuropathology, immunopathology, and molecular biology of Alzheimer’s disease. It would make an excellent addition to libraries as a reference text for many researchers of varied interests.

CLARE GALTON


Organ transplantation, once medical exotica, is now almost routine in the United Kingdom each year are performed cadaveric organ transplants of about 1800 kidneys (in addition to 160 live kidney donors), 700 livers, and 450 heart/lungs (UK Transplant Support Service). Even though basic surgical techniques were established at the beginning of the century in canine models. Translating these experiments to humans awaited safe and effective immunosuppression. Until the late 1970s the only forms of immunosuppression were radiation (total body or total lymphoid) and non-selective chemical reagents (benzene and tolouene). Then the antiproliferative drug 6-mercaptopurine (6-MP) was introduced, shortly followed by a derivative, azathioprine, with improved oral bioavailability. Combined with corticosteroids, these allowed the first human solid organ transplants to be performed: in 1963 the first lung transplant in Mississippi and liver transplant in Colorado. Then in 1967 Christian Barnard captured the world’s imagination with the first heart transplant. His technique has been modified slightly since, but the increasing success of organ transplantation rests mainly on improved immunosuppression with drugs that selectively suppress lymphocytes by inhibiting lymphokine generation (cyclosporin A, tacrolimus), focal transduction (sirolimus, lefunomide), or differentiation (15-deoxyspergualin) pathways. As a result, over the last 10 years in the United Kingdom, the 1 year survival of grafts has improved from 80% to 90% (kidney), 55% to 75% (liver), and 70% to 90% (heart/lung).

Wijdicks estimates that 10% of transplantation patients have a significant neurological complication (1). Without common being neurotoxicity of immunosuppressive drugs, seizures, and failure to awaken. Yet this is the first text devoted to the neurological aspects of organ transplantation. It is therefore a timely subject and the increasing success of transplantation may produce white matter changes and dementia such as CADDASIL, cerebral lupus, and the primary antiphospholipid syndrome. Some typographical errors and mistranslations detract a little further from a book which seems unlikely to appeal to most neurologists, although it will no doubt be a source of reference to those working in the field of cognitive disorders, particularly vascular dementias.

ALASDAIR COLES


Volume nine of the Current Issues in Neurodegenerative Disease series examines the interplay between cerebrovascular disease and dementia, particularly Alzheimer’s disease. Two hundred pages of what are essentially 20 brief review articles comprise this text, sadly without any illustrations. But the introduction to each chapter there is a certain sense of deja vu, although on the positive side each contribution is extremely well referenced.

The book is divided into five sections covering the historical concepts of vascular and Alzheimer’s dementias, the arguments for a pure vascular dementia, the role of Alzheimer’s disease in the genesis of dementia after stroke, the commonality of white matter changes on neuroimaging to dementia, and finally a short section examining practical questions such as the management of stroke in patients with dementia. Although common conditions and their own right, stroke and Alzheimer’s disease do seem to cross paths more often than would be expected by chance alone, and more often than can be explained by the presence of unpaired angiopathy and recurrent lobar haemorrhages. Perhaps common genetic factors are responsible and here the ApoE alleles are discussed. The comprehensive section on deep white matter lesions seeks to explain the connection further—and convinces the reader that there is still a lot which is not well understood. It is in this section particularly that illustrations are greatly missed. This limitation is made of other conditions which may produce white matter changes and dementia such as CADDASIL, cerebral lupus, and the primary antiphospholipid syndrome. Some typographical errors and mistranslations detract a little further from a book which seems unlikely to appeal to most neurologists, although it will no doubt be a source of reference to those working in the field of cognitive disorders, particularly vascular dementias.

PETER MARTIN


Evolutionary biologists would probably tell us that the enchantment of storytellers is due to survival having been dependent on the passing of oral culture from one generation to the next. Information put in narrative form not only delights, but is easily recalled. Stories also construct meaning by interweaving observation, inference, motive, and consequence in a fashion that informs future action. Our experience of the world is constructed around such narratives. They define us as individuals, family members, professionals, and cultural groups.

This book is a series of essays on psychotherapy, psychiatry, and also medicine that sees the awareness and use of narrative in clinical practice as a construct that can both

PETER MARTIN


Evolutionary biologists would probably tell us that the enchantment of storytellers is due to survival having been dependent on the passing of oral culture from one generation to the next. Information put in narrative form not only delights, but is easily recalled. Stories also construct meaning by interweaving observation, inference, motive, and consequence in a fashion that informs future action. Our experience of the world is constructed around such narratives. They define us as individuals, family members, professionals, and cultural groups.

This book is a series of essays on psychotherapy, psychiatry, and also medicine that sees the awareness and use of narrative in clinical practice as a construct that can both
Holmes.

chotherapy by James Phillips and Jeremy are two very fine accounts of narrative in psy-

ters concerning attachment theory, a useful issues, and there is repetition in various chap-

There is a rather prosaic essay on gender for all psychiatric trainees.

als by their illness as in schizophrenics. Every psychiatric library should buy this book for this paper alone, which should be required reading for everyone.

The rest of this book is of variable quality. There is a rather prosaic essay on gender issues, and there is repetition in various chapters concerning attachment theory, a useful but overworked paradigm. However, there are two very fine accounts of narrative in psychotherapy by James Phillips and Jeremy Holmes.

DUNCAN MCLEAN


In a small accessible and easily digestible volume, the authors address a clinically important field. Faced with slim evidence on which to base clinical recommendations, they acknowledge that their very useful management advice “has often had to be based on practical clinical experience rather than the results of clinical trials or formal research . . .” This disclaimer seems to have allowed them to mix evidence and opinion, limit references, and confuse the reader regarding the level of evidence. A pity, as the authors, with special expertise in this important area, have made a good start in putting together different aspects of the care of the woman with epilepsy in a practical book that is of direct interest and relevant to neurologists, obstetricians, general practitioners, community psychiatrists, and trainees.

Moving on from the general to the particu-

lar, the text, although expansive in parts, glosses over some important points. Examples include (a) which oral vitamin K preparations are considered safe in pregnancy (phynometadione), (b) differential efficacy of various antiepileptic drugs in different syndromes versus side effect and teratogenicity profile, (c) more information on the availability of available evidence to support the statement “no monotherapy human abnor-

mality reported” with certain new antiepilep-

tic drugs in pregnancy, (d) the need to consider the amenorrhoea prevention well before the menopause (not only with enzyme inducers drugs such as valproate which has also been implicated), (e) discussion of differences (and available formulations) between synthetic and natural progesterone, (f) stands of pregnancy when various malformations are detectable on scanning, and (g) time to closure of the neural tube (different from the 21-5th day they quote as the “most sensitive time of the fetus to the induction of malformations by exogenous agents.”)

Despite these comments (made with an eye on the next edition) I would recommend this book to all those involved in the care of women with epilepsy.

LINA NASHEP


Childhood Epilepsies and Brain Development is the fruit of a symposium held in 1997 to try and bridge the chasm between those working in the clinic or at the bedside and those in the laboratory. Both groups must collaborate and communicate to improve the management of children (and older patients) with epilepsy.

The book is essentially a collection of monographs of heterogeneous content and style and the result, perhaps not surprisingly, is that some of the component parts are bet-

ter than the sum. The clinically oriented section will clearly be of particular interest to those who treat children and their families. The chapters on infantile spasms and Lennox-Gastaut syndrome are informative and provide some new but speculative insights into the pathogenesis of spasms. However, it was surprising that severe myo-

clonic epilepsy of infancy did not merit a spe-

ific chapter in view of the unique electro-

clinical evolution and natural history of this syndrome. The crucial issue of the cognitive and behavioural sequelae of early and fre-

quent seizures on the immature brain, which is probably of most concern to both clinicians and families, is succinctly addressed in two chapters—although a clear and consistent cause and effect relation remains to be estab-

lished. The chapters covering basic neuro-

physiology, development, genetics, and neu-

ropathology, are erudite and fascinating but at times are barely comprehensible. Further work is needed, including answering the funda-

mental question—why does the first sei-

zure occur—before the clinician and basic scientist are able to talk the same language—

for the benefit of the patient with epilepsy.

The concept of Childhood Epilepsies and Brain Development is innovative and com-

mendable and, although many of the mono-

graphs are interesting and informative, the overall impression is that the individual parts (the chapters) are better than the whole (the book). The lack of an index is a strange omission perhaps indicating a prolonged editorial atypicality absence, and although this militates against it becoming a well thumbed reference text, the book is an erudite addition to the pharmacist’s knowledge that their very useful management work is needed, including answering the funda-

mental question—why does the first sei-

zure occur—before the clinician and basic scientist are able to talk the same language—

for the benefit of the patient with epilepsy.

The Maudsley prescriptive guidelines are produced each year for a local readership, but this, the fifth edition, is the first to go public.

The authors and principal contributors, a mixture of pharmacists and psychiatrists with an interest and background in clinical psychopharmacology, are to be compli-

mented on producing a guide of manageable size and ready accessibility.

The book is divided into sections dealing with the treatment of broad groups of clinical disorders—for example, psychosis—special patient populations—for example, elderly people, with further sections on the manage-

ment of emergencies and the adverse effects of psychotropic drugs. Much of the information is laid out in tabular form. It could become an indispensable resource for a busy on call psychia-

tor house officer (the dimensions would fit comfortably into the pocket of a clinical white coat, were they still to be worn) but more sen-

ior clinicians will find plenty of use for it in the clinic. It does not aim at an academic tradition, but provides a useful list of references.

There are a few cavils. The section on treatment of anxiety is skimpy (one and a half pages) compared with say the treatment of affective illness (22 pages), or substance misuse (16 pages). The brevity is only explained by the undeveloped state of that particular area of psychopharmacology. Sections on treatment of mania and indications for lithium, carbamazepine and indications for ECG seem to have been displaced from some other primer for busy junior doctors. There is no index.

These quibbles apart, prescribing guide-

lines can be wholeheartedly recommended.

SIMON FLEMINGER
Selective hemihypesthesia due to tentorial coup injury against dorsolateral midbrain: potential cause of sensory impairment after closed head injury

NOKATSU SAeki, YOSHINORI HIGUCHI, KENRO SUNAMI and AKIRA YAMAURA

J Neurol Neurosurg Psychiatry 2000 68: 117-118
doi: 10.1136/jnnp.68.1.117