LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The rostrocaudal gradient for somatosensory perception in the human postcentral gyrus

Anatomical organisation of the primate postcentral gyrus has been described in terms of several different cytoarchitectures.1,2 Powell and Mountcastle stated that the area 3 was a typical koniocortex with granular cells, whereas in areas 1 and 2 the morphological characteristics changed gradually to the homotypical parietal association cortex in the monkey Macaca mulatta.1 Iwamura et al reported the physiological correlates on the anatomical rostrocaudal axis in monkeys.3 The ratio of skin neurons to total neurons was the largest in area 3b and decreased gradually toward the caudal part of the postcentral gyrus. Specific types of stimulation such as rubbing of the skin in certain directions were effective in activating some of the caudal part of the postcentral gyrus. The anatomical and physiological data in the primate lead to the reasonable hypothesis that there is a rostrocaudal functional gradient within the postcentral gyrus. This notion may explain why a lesion in the postcentral gyrus causes varied sensory disturbance in various people.

A 49 year old right handed man suddenly developed dysesthesia in the right hand. This recovered gradually, but 1 month later he still had an impaired tactile recognition for objects. His voluntary movements were skillful. Deep tendon reflex was slightly exaggerated in his right arm. Babinski's sign was absent. His language was normal. Brain MRI on the 35th day after the onset showed a laminar necrosis on the caudal edge of the lateral portion of the left postcentral gyrus (figure).

Somaesthetic assessment was done during the 21–28th days of the illness. Elementary somatosensory functions were assessed, including light touch (long fibre cotton), pain (pinprick), thermal sensation (cold and hot water), joint position sense (tested by the ability of the patient to identify flexion or extension of fingers with closed eyes), and vibration sense (128-Hz tuning fork). Intermediate somatosensory tasks were carried out. For two point discrimination, the examiner placed a pair of plastic needles of a slide caliper on the index finger pad of the patient, who had his eyes closed, and asked him to answer the number of touched needles, “one” or “two”. For tactile localisation the examiner touched a point on the right or left hand of the patient, who had his eyes closed, and asked him to indicate the point by touching the place with the first finger of the counter hand. For weight perception, the patients were asked to arrange the stimuli in a correct order of the weight with either the left or right hand. The stimuli were six metal plates of equal size, shape, and texture weighing 50, 60, 70, 80, 90, and 100 g. For texture perception, we prepared six wooden plates of an identical size and shape, on which one of six different textures (sandpaper, felt, wool, cork, fine grain, synthetic rubber) were mounted. The patient palpated one texture by either hand with his eyes closed. Then he was asked to select tactually a correct one among the six textures. For shape perception (three dimensional figures) the patient palpated one of the five wooden objects (cylinder, cube, sphere, prism, and cone) with his eyes closed. Then he was asked to explain the shape verbally. For extinction, the examiner delivered light and brief tactile stimuli, using the tips of the index fingers, to the dorsum of left, right, or both hands of the patient.

For tactile object recognition, the 15 objects that are used in the naming list of the Western aphasia battery test were presented to either hand. For naming of objects, the patient was asked to name a single manipulated object. In matching of objects, the patient first grasps a single object among a selection of five objects, and then he was asked to select the correct object among the five.

In elementary sensory function, the test for light touch, pain, thermal sensation, joint position sense, and vibration sense demonstrated no abnormalities in both hands. The results of intermediate sensory tests showed that in all tests, except for shape perception, we could detect no disturbance in both hands. He could not discriminate the shape with his right hand. The correct responses were 5/5 with the left hand and 0/5 with his right hand. The correct responses in the tactile naming test were 2/15 for the right hand and 15/15 for the left hand. The correct responses of the tactile-tactile matching test was 4/15 with his right hand and 15/15 with his left hand. So the abilities of tactile recognition and tactile-tactile matching were disturbed with the right hand.

According to Delay, disturbances of the tactile process in the cortex are classified into at least three types.4 Ahylognosia is a disturbance in the ability to discriminate materials. Amorphognosia is a disturbance in the differentiation of forms. Tactile agnosia is the inability to recognise the identity of objects in the absence of ahylognosia and amorphognosia. In Delay's terms, our patient showed amorphognosia but not tactile agnosia. Iwamura and Tanaka suggested that the hand region of area 2 in the rhesus monkey is concerned with the tactile perception of the discrimination of certain object forms.5 The lesion localised at the equivalent cortical region. This region thus may be critical for the tactile discrimination for shape.

Rich intrinsic corticocortical connections are demonstrated within the rhesus monkey's postcentral gyrus, starting from Brodmann area 3b and projecting to areas 1 and 2.6 This corticocortical connection may be a main route of inputs to area 2.7 This suggests that within the postcentral gyrus somatosensory information is processed from primary sensory reception to integrating and more associating stages. The results from our patient are compatible with the notion that in the caudal portion of the human postcentral gyrus the more complex process such as shape perception is processed.

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Brain MRI of the patient. Transaxial T1 weighted (above) and T2 weighted images (below) are shown. The T1 weighted image disclosed a high intensity lesion distributed laminarily in the caudal edge of the left postcentral gyrus (Brodmann 1–2). Arrows indicate the left central sulcus.

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Isolated spastic paraparesis leading to diagnosis of Friedreich's ataxia

Friedreich's ataxia is the most common hereditary ataxia. This neurological disorder was only defined by its association with ataxia, cerebellar syndrome, and pyramidal signs. Atypical forms are increasingly recognized.

Friedreich's ataxia is a genetically homogeneous condition. The frataxin gene was mapped to 9q13-q21.1 in 1988, and identified in 1996. The mutations are most often GAA expansions located in the first intron. Normal alleles range from 6 to 36 GAA repeats, whereas pathological alleles range from 90 to 1300 repeats. Ninety-six percent of patients are homozygous for GAA repeats, whereas pathological alleles carry expansions of 2.5 kb and 3.1 kb on the chromosome.


Marked increase of interleukin-6 in injured human nerves and dorsal root ganglia

Nerve injury, particularly of the brachial plexus, may result in lifelong disability and chronic pain, despite technically excellent reconstructive surgery. Studies of molecular changes in injured nerves may identify new treatments to enhance the success of nerve repair such as with recombinant human neurotrophic factors. Interleukin-6 (IL-6) is a member of the neurotrophic cytokine family that includes ciliary neurotrophic factor (CNTF), leukaemia inhibitory factor (LIF), and oncostatin M. As there is increasing evidence of a neurotrophic role for IL-6 in animal models of nerve injury and inflammation, we have studied, for the first time in humans, IL-6 protein in injured and control peripheral nerve and dorsal root ganglia, using specific immunoassay, immunocytochemistry, and western blotting. We report a remarkable increase of IL-6 concentrations in acutely avulsed dorsal root ganglia and injured nerves.

Proximal and distal injured nerve segments were obtained from six adult patients with traction brachial plexus injury, ranging from 2 weeks to 10 weeks after trauma. Injured dorsal root ganglia were collected from seven adult patients with brachial spinal root avulsion injuries (central axotomy), ranging from 3 days to 15 months after trauma. Tissue removal was a necessary part of the surgical repair procedure; in all cases


informed consent was obtained for tissue collection and the study had ethics committee approval. Control dorsal root ganglia were obtained from four subjects and segments of normal nerve from five subjects at postmortem; all died from myocardial causes. Tissue extracts prepared as previously described \(^1\) were analysed for IL-6 using an enzyme immunoassay (PeliKinbe Compact\(^\text{TM}\), Eurogenetics, UK Ltd, Middlesex, UK) with recombinant human IL-6 standard calibrated against the World Health Organisation (WHO) First International Standard 89/548. For immunohistochemistry, frozen sections (8 \(\mu\)m) were fixed in 4\% paraformaldehyde in phosphate buffered saline for 30 minutes. Sections were incubated with monoclonal antibodies to IL-6 (CLB.IL-6/6-7 20 \(\mu\)g/mL, diluted 1:400; gift from K Nordlind, Sweden, or ref No 1618–01, Genzyme, USA) and immunoreactivity to IL-6 visualised using a standard immunoperoxidase method (ABC; Vector Labs, UK) with nickel enhancement as described elsewhere. \(^2\) Specific immunoreactivity was extinguished by a control of the primary antibody (CLB.IL-6/6-7, ref 111–40–136) in the range 0.01–0.1 \(\mu\)g/mL. For western blotting, tissue extracts were separated by gel electrophoresis on 15\% acrylamide gels and then electrochemically transferred onto nitrocellulose membranes (Hybond Super, Amersham) using a semidry transblotter. Strips were blocked in a solution of 5\% non-fat milk in phosphate buffered saline (PBS) containing 0.09\% Tween-20 for 1 hour, and then incubated with CLB.IL-6/6-7 (with or without IL-6 peptide, 20 \(\mu\)M) at a final titre of 1:1000, for 2 hours. The strips were then incubated with anti-rabbit HRP (Sigma) at 1:10,000 dilution for a further 30 minutes. Bands were then visualised on a x ray film after treatment with ECL reagents (Amersham).

Concentrations of IL-6 were increased in injured nerves (figure). The increase was greater in nerve segments distal to injury, but IL-6 concentrations in both proximal and distal segments were both significantly increased compared with controls (p<0.01, Mann-Whitney test). Concentrations of IL-6 were greatly raised in two avulsed dorsal root ganglia obtained 3 and 4 days after injury (354 pg/mg and 128 pg/mg). At longer operative delays after injury, IL-6 concentrations in avulsed dorsal root ganglia approached the range of values obtained for postmortem controls (4.9 (SD 2.9) pg/mg for operative delays from 1 week to 15 months, and 0.2 (SD 0.06) pg/mg for controls). Western blotting showed the presence of an expected strong 29 kDa band in detergent extracts of injured nerve, which was abolished in the presence of excess synthetic IL-6.

Immunohistochemical studies with both antibody and/or histochemical detection of IL-6 staining within the somata of dorsal root ganglion neurons of all sizes, particularly of small size. Immunostaining of postmortem ganglia seemed similar in pattern, but was generally weaker. Interleukin-6 immunoreactivity was also seen in nerve-like structures within the dorsal root ganglia and distal injured nerve segments.

The pattern of changes of IL-6 in injured nerves and dorsal root ganglia differs from that seen for other neurotrophic factors, such as nerve growth factor (NGF) and glial-derived neurotrophic factor (GDNF). \(^3\) Concentrations of IL-6 were usually higher in distal nerve segments when compared with those proximal to the site of injury; this seems to result from IL-6 synthesis in Schwann cells in Wallerian degeneration, as shown by immunostaining, and previous animal model studies. \(^3\) Interleukin-6 and its receptor have been shown to be required for normal nerve regeneration in animal models, which may be enhanced with exogenous IL-6. \(^3\) The injured nerves presumably take up IL-6 synthesised in the Schwann cells, and transport it proximally, which accounts for the higher IL-6 concentrations in proximal segments of injured nerves in comparison with controls. Anterogradely transported IL-6, if released in the spinal cord, may play a part in processing, for which there is some evidence from animal models. In this study, the most remarkable finding was the very high concentration of IL-6 in extracts of the acutely avulsed dorsal root ganglia, with much smaller increases at later times after injury. The acute increase of IL-6 could originate from sympathetic nerve cells themselves, as has been shown with IL-6 mRNA in situ hybridisation studies of rat sensory ganglia after peripheral nerve injury, \(^4\) or from inflammatory cells. This increase may have autocrine/paracrine effects, which may aid cell survival, or have a role in sensory or sympathetic sprouting.

We conclude that IL-6 is a significant factor in the events after nerve injury in humans, particularly in sensory neurons. The potential therapeutic role of nerve repair for reconstituting human IL-6,3 agents that modulate its action, deserves further investigation.

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**Crossed face apraxia**

Apraxia refers to the disorder of movement planning and execution that cannot be accounted for by motor or sensory deficits nor by other cognitive impairments. The term apraxia encompasses several different deficits, including “face apraxia”, which defines the impairment of movements performed within the district of the cranial nerves. Group studies have shown that the face apraxia results from lesions of the left hemisphere. \(^5\) However, a few cases can be gleaned from the literature of patients whose face apraxia followed lesions in their right hemisphere and was mentioned in fleeting comments. \(^6\)

Face apraxia has generally been equated to oral apraxia and tests aimed at assessing it only comprise items exploring skilled movements of the lips, cheeks, and tongue. However, several early authors reported on patients with face apraxia also showing movement deficits of the eyes and eyebrows. \(^3\) Some anecdotal evidence of upper face apraxia is also reported by recent investigations. \(^7\) We report on a patient, who, 2 years after a right hemispheric lesion, showed severe face apraxia for movements of both the lower and the upper parts of the face. A 55 year old artist with 17 years of experience had an ischaemic stroke in August 1997. A series of CT and MR scans showed a right frontoparietal insular hypodensity also encompassing on the anterior region of the right, internal capsule and of the right deep nuclei, sparing the mesial and the anterior part of the parietal lobe. He had always been right handed, scored 100% right handed on both the Edinburgh handedness questionnaire and the 12 question handedness inventory. \(^8\) He also denied familiarity for left handedness. We examined the patient in October 1999, 5 months after the end of his rehabilitation therapy and more than 2 years after his stroke. He still showed a severe left paralexia, hemianopia, and a deficit of the lower facial nerve. No further deficits of the cranial nerves were seen. In particular, no abnormalities of movements of the oculomotor nerves were normal. The patient did not show general cognitive impairment: his scores on intelligence tests were well within the normal range. At the time of our assessment he did not show clear evidence of visuospatial neglect which was mentioned in the clinical notes at onset. He performed flawlessly tasks assessing the ability to search for particular targets, in reading, or in copying. Although he omitted a few left details in copying complex geometrical drawings. During neurological examination the patient proved unable to close his eyes on verbal command. He failed even when the examiner showed him how to do it. He was therefore submitted to a battery of tests assessing apraxia including the upper and lower face apraxia test. \(^9\) The nine upper and 29 lower items of the test were performed first on imitation and then, considering the possibility that the patient could have some difficulty in perception, on verbal command. On imitation, the patient scored 2/45 and 320/25.435 (adjusted scores) on the upper and lower face...
sections of the test respectively, both well below the inner tolerance limit cut off scores (38.43/45; 400.04/435). On command he failed all items of the upper face test and he failed the same items of the lower face test which he failed on imitation.

His errors were perseveration of the previous item or substitutions with another.

Similarly, asked to close his eyes, he said “yes” at first, then he opened his mouth, then he tried to show his tongue. He was unable to close either his right or his left eye, to look leftward or rightward keeping his head motionless, or to wrinkle his forehead or his nose.

The patient’s face apraxia could not be due to motor impersistence because he was not required to hold a position for a given time. Moreover, the fact that his face apraxia was long lasting excludes the possibility that upper face apraxia has to be drawn back to diachisis or other similar phenomena. Finally, none recovered at the time of testing and there was no cognitive deterioration to account for the presence of this symptom.

Ideomotor apraxia was also assessed by means of a 24 item test. His score with the right arm and hand was normal (64/72, cut off score=53). The patient was not aphasic; his language was emitted with a normal prosody, was well articulated, informative, and without qualitatively aphasic errors.

This case points to a possible role that the right hemisphere might have in normal facial praxis, both for the lower and upper face apraxia as a whole. Moreover, it confirms the dissociation between face apraxia and aphasia, as well as between limb and face apraxia.

A case of Bickerstaff’s brainstem encephalitis mimicking tetanus

Bickerstaff’s brainstem encephalitis is characterised by acute ophthalmoptasia and ataxia with progressive consciousness disturbance. Although Bickerstaff’s rigidity in the recovery phase, rigidity in the clinical course of Bickerstaff’s brainstem encephalitis has rarely been reported. We encountered a case in which the initial diagnosis was tetanus because of the progression of severe rigidity and risus sardonius, but which turned out to be Bickerstaff’s brainstem encephalitis owing to the presence of anti-GQ1b IgG antibody.

A 23 year old man who had had no prior apparent infectious episode began to show dysaesthesia, clumsiness, and slight weakness of all limbs (day 1). Due to rapid exacerbation of these symptoms he was admitted to a hospital the day after the onset of the first symptoms. He became irritable because of increased anxiety, although he was alert and completely oriented. He was transferred to another hospital for further treatment. There he required assistance in walking because of new severe rigidity in all his limbs. Oral haloperidol (maximum dose 20 mg/day) was given for 10 days to reduce his anxiety, but his symptoms did not lessen. Treatment with intravenous methylprednisolone (1000 mg/day) from day 14 to 16, as well as acyclovir (1500 mg/day) given intravenously, failed to ameliorate his symptoms. On day 17, he was transferred to our hospital for further evaluations and treatment.

Physical examination on day 17 showed a body temperature of 37.0°C, blood pressure 130/80 mm Hg, pulse rate 100 beats/min, respiratory rate 12 min, and severe hyperhidrosis.

Neurological examination showed that he was alert and well oriented. The pupils were isoropic and round but mydriatic. Light reflexes were prompt. Bilateral blephaloptosis was present. Extraocular movement was completely involuntary, including upward and horizontally. Restricted of mouth opening and coordination could not be made due to severe rigidity of the neck, trunk, and limbs. Deep tendon reflexes were absent, probably secondary to the rigidity. The Babinski response was negative bilaterally. Voluntary movements were markedly slow, and sitting balance was poor. Opiothotonus was not present. No abnormality was found in the sensory examination. Babinski’s sign was present before the drug was administered. Haloperidol was unlikely because rigidity was present before the drug was administered. Bickerstaff reported the development of parkinsonism, including rigidity, within 2–4 weeks of onset and during the recovery phase in Bickerstaff’s brainstem encephalitis, with the exception of a fatal case in which parkinsonism developed before maximal disability.

Our patient showed rigidity from the beginning. Although an overlap of Guillain-Barré syndrome could not be excluded, our diagnosis was Bickerstaff’s brainstem encephalitis, because the patient’s case was close to the exceptional case reported by Bickerstaff. Antitetanus immunoglobulin is comprised of high dose polyclonal IgGs to tetanus toxin and other types of IgGs and IgMs, and it may have had an effect similar to that of intravenous immunoglobulin in our patient. His dramatic recovery immediately after antitetanus immunoglobulin administration could not be explained as part of a natural course. Although the mechanism for the early appearance of rigidity in our
reported case is not clear. Bickerstaff’s brain-
stem encephalitis should be considered the
differential diagnosis when rigidity, such as
tetanus, is present.

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Lysozyme in ventriculitis: a marker for
diagnosis and disease progression

The development of a hydrocephalus as a
typical complication after subarachnoid
haemorrhage often requires implantation of a
catheter for drainage of ventricular fluid.
Because this is an open system it carries a risk of
development of bacterial ventriculitis by
contamination. This potentially life threaten-
ing or neurologically disabling disease can be
diagnosed by microbiological tests on the
CSF. However, microbiological examination
is often not possible or shows pathological
results only after a delay, probably because of
antibiotic prophylaxis. Standard CSF cultures
are difficult to interpret, because subarach-
noid haemorrhage leads to an irritation
syndrome in the CSF, which can imitate infection.

Lysozyme is a basic polypeptide of 129
amino acids weighing 15 kDa, which is found
in neutrophil granulocytes and monocytes,
and is released from cytoplasmic and az-
urophilic granules.² It is capable of degrading
bacterial proteoglycans.³ Lysozyme shows
significantly higher concentrations in CSF in
case of bacterial meningitis in comparison with
abacterial meningitis, whereas in other
diseases of the CNS much lower concentrations
are found.³ ³

We retrospectively documented the results
from 146 patients who underwent external
ventricular drainage after subarachnoid
haemorrhage. As well as documenting the
frequency and timing of infection, the
medical notes were inspected for risk factors
of infection.

In 64 patients (15 with microbiologically
confirmed ventriculitis, and 49 with no
evidence of ventriculitis) the following
measurements were compared: serial CSF cytol-
ysis; total protein; albumin, IgM, IgA, IgG;
plasma/CSF ratio of albumin, IgM, IgA, IgG;
locally produced fraction of IgM, IgA, IgG
and CSF oligoclonal IgG, lactate, and

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antitoxin in CSF during the 4 day periods around
the detection of bacteria.

Mean concentrations of lysozyme in ventriculitis during the 4 day periods around

1.0001, df=1). In 17 samples, the ventricular concentration of lysozyme was
compared with the concentration in lumbar
CSF samples taken simultaneously. The
mean ratio of lumbar to ventricular concentra-
tion was 2.24 (SD 0.525) (range 1.4–2.8, 2 tailed
p=0.0003, Wilcoxon matched pairs test).

Our study shows a clear connection between
the duration of drainage, and the risk of ventriculitis. The indication for implanting
or continuing ventricular drainage should
therefore be checked daily, and alternatives
such as catheter exchange should be consid-
ered at an early stage. The documented risk
factors show that improving the standards of
hygiene and nursing care are necessary for
reduction of the risk of ventriculitis. We
found the presence of oligoclonal IgG bands,
CSF IgM,³ CSF lactate, and lysozyme in the
CSF to be statistically relevant indices for
diagnosis. The finding that lysozyme concen-
trations in lumbar CSF are more than twice as
high as in ventricular CSF has not to our
knowledge been described previously. Evi-
dently lysozyme, as a relatively large protein
molecule, is concentrated in the lumbar CSF.
The interpretation and the definition of nor-
mal values must take account of these
findings.

This study shows that a single, marginally
pathological value has less diagnostic value
than an increase in lysozyme detected in a series of CSF samples. As a pragmatic
approach to early diagnosis of ventriculitis,
we recommend a CSF analysis within the 1st
week, including measurement of lysozyme
concentration. If drainage is to be continued
longer than 1 week, we would advise daily
CSF analysis, in particular of lysozyme. If
there is a relative increase in lysozyme
concentration, ventriculitis should be as-
sumed, even when microbiological findings
are still negative.

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Clinicoanatomical correlates of a Fou rire prodromique in a pontine infarction

Pathological laughter heralding a neurological deficit was first described by Ferré in 1903 as *Fou rire prodromique*. We present a patient with prodromal pathological laughter and a right pontine infarction in the territory of the paramedian branch of the basilar artery. These are the first clinicoanatomical correlates integrating MRI lesion mapping with immunohistochemical studies for a serotoninergic specific enzyme of human brain stems.

A right handed 61 year old woman was admitted to hospital for a left hemiplegia. She presented with a history of diabetes, high blood pressure, and an old myocardial infarct. She had experienced spells of uncontrollable and inappropriate laughter during the night and the subsequent morning. At noon, her left side became paralysed. On admission, she was alert, attentive, and had a right sixth nerve palsy and a left hemiparesis that included the face. There was a left Babinski’s sign.

Neuropsychological testing disclosed a mild attentional deficit and a decreased phonological fluency. There was no lability of affect and no inappropriate crying. She recognised the laughter as abnormal. The spells were usually totally inappropriate and without any associated mirth. Sometimes they could be triggered by an unfamiliar situation, such as talking to the physical therapist.

To measure pathological laughter with a validated scale, we used the pathological laughter scoring system (PLCS) and her score was 15/27. A psychiatric evaluation was negative for manic disorder. Brain MRI disclosed an infarction in the right ventral pons without other focal lesion (figure, A). An EEG was normal.

Spells of pathological laughter continued for a week then gradually resolved. After 2 weeks, the PLCS score was 2/27.

The limits of the lesion in the right ventral pons were overlaid on a section of a corresponding level taken from a series of immunohistochemical preparations used to map the entire human serotoninergic system.1 The main tracts and structures involved are shown in the figure (B, C).

Pathological laughter is an exaggerated, uncontrollable, and inappropriate laughter usually unrelated to a true emotion or a congruent mood. It is found in gelastic epilepsy (ictal pathological laughter), associated with lesions in the hypothalamus, anterior cingulate, or basal temporal lobe. Non-ictal pathological laughter is often associated with pathological crying and usually seen with bilateral, multiple cerebral lesions as a component of pseudobulbar palsy. However, non-ictal pathological laughter can occur in patients with unilateral lesion, and without pseudobulbar palsy. In these cases, imaging studies show lesions in the palaeocortical, thalamocapsular, and pontine base areas. Recognised causes include strokes or tumours. Non-ictal pathological laughter may also occur in the cortical and subcortical territory of large arteries, usually the middle cerebral artery, and, in these cases, it may be very difficult to distinguish from a gelastic seizure. In prodromal pathological laughter, the locations of the lesions and the pathologies are similar, and include mainly strokes and tumours. The pathophysiology of pathological laughter was discussed by Wilson2 in 1924, who suggested a motor release phenomenon. He pointed to an imbalance between voluntary motor pathways in the corticobulbar tract and involuntary pathways from limbic circuits to the facial nerve nucleus, the nucleus ambiguous, and anterior horn cells that subserve the phrenic nerve (faciorespiratory coordination of laughter). Another hypothesis involves serotoninergic neurotransmission, originating in the pontine serotoninergic raphe nuclei. Pharmacological evidence also shows that serotonin reuptake inhibitors may improve a patient's laughter.

The raphe nuclei are divided in a rostral and a caudal group.1 Nuclei of the rostral group, in the midbrain and rostral pons, project rostrally to the forebrain. They are separated by a gap from the nuclei of the caudal group extending from the caudal pons to the end of the medulla. These nuclei project to the entire brainstem and spinal cord. Serotoninergic neurons of the caudal pons lying in the ventral tegmentum belong to the raphe nucleus magnus (RMg), and are at the origin of a widespread innervation of brainstem structures.

Our patient presented with prodromal pathological laughter heralding an infarction in the right ventral pons, in the territory of the paramedian branch of the basilar artery. She had no other signs of pseudobulbar palsy. It is unlikely that pathological laughter in our case was due to seizures (gelastic epilepsy) because of the long duration of the episodes, the absence of altered sensorium, automatism, or EEG abnormalities, and the location of the stroke. The unique and circumscribed lesion of the corticospinal and corticobulbar tracts at the level of the ventral pons, saving the medial lemniscus, may seem to favour Wilson’s hypothesis: however, the posterior angle of the lesion along the midline also...
involves the serotoninergic RMg (figure, A-C). An involvement of this serotoninergic nucleus is further supported by the temporal characteristics of pathological laughter, occurring in transient bursts before the development of motor signs in the limbs. We therefore conjecture that pathological laughter was prodromal because ischaemia began at the distal end of the vascular territory of the paramedian branch of basilar artery involving the RMg first. Both hypotheses could be reconciled if we assume that emotional motor pathways can be modulated by serotoninergic neurotransmission from the raphe nuclei. A small lesion involving both emotional motor pathways and raphe nuclei would also explain the location of prodromal pathological laughter in the pons.

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Electrophysiological showed fibrillation potentials and neurogenic motor units recruitment in all forearm right median innervated muscles, including the pronator teres; in thenar median innervated muscles abundant fasciculations and severely reduced recruitment patterns were the major findings, with minimal denervation; on nerve conduction studies the distal right median cMAP had a latency of 4 ms and a positive to negative peak amplitude of 25 mV; antidromic SNAP recorded at the third finger had an onset latency of 3.6 ms and a positive peak amplitude of 70 µV; forearm median motor and sensory conduction velocities were 54 m/s and 60 m/s respectively; stimulation of the median nerve at more proximal sites disclosed a partial motor (fig 1 (A)) and complete sensory (fig 1 (B)) conduction block in the distal third of the upper arm; an inching technique allowed better localisation of the site of conduction block about 9 cm proximal to the elbow along the median nerve course. The rest of the neurophysiological study, performed in four limbs, was normal. Routine blood chemistry was normal, including tests for diabetes, thyroid function, and vasculitis. A study of DNA excluded the presence of the deletion at chromosome 17p11.2-p12.

Radiography of the right humerus ruled out a supracondylar fracture; an MRI study of the right upper arm using T1 weighted axial images along the nerve course showed the median nerve to be normally recognisable within the arm neurovascular bundle above the lesional site (fig 2 A); following the nerve course in more distal sections the nerve seemed to separate from the bundle as it approached the belly of the brachialis muscle (fig 2 B). In the subsequent more distal sections the nerve was no longer recognisable within the image of the brachialis muscle belly (fig 2 C). At surgical exploration of the right median nerve, the proximal segment seemed to be located within the neurovascular bundle in a deep inf erof lateral position. At the transition between the middle and the distal third of the arm, where the basilic vein joined the humeral vein, the nerve was found to turn deeply through the brachialis muscle belly from which it emerged about 5 cm more distal. Muscle fibres covering the nerve were sectioned allowing appraisal of a consistent reduction of the size of the nerve throughout its intramuscular course. No other abnormalities were detected along the nerve until it entered the antecubital fossa (fig 2 C).

Neurolysis was followed by clinical and neurophysiological improvement. Fifteen days after surgery hand function improved; 2 years later there was no weakness and EMG was consistent with a good reinnervation process.

Our patient presented a subacute upper median mononeuropathy in the distal third of the upper limb associated with an anomalous intramuscular course through the brachialis muscle; this was documented by neurophysiological investigation, imaging studies, and surgical exploration. To our knowledge this is the first report of a median nerve lesion at that site associated with such anatomical findings.

Anatomical variations involving the course or the structure of muscles and nerves and their relations are reported as not uncommon in cadaveric dissection studies of the upper limbs1, as these anatomical variations are rarely associated with peripheral nerve lesions, their pathophysiological relation remains somehow unclear.

For the proximal upper arm Bellmann and Vollmer3 described an isolated case of median nerve compression at its origin by an anomalous muscle band originating from the interval between the subscapularis and latissimus dorsi muscles and crossing the neurovascular bundle to reach the anterior surface of the humerus. In the distal upper arm and elbow region the presence of a supracondylar ligament and the variable relation of the median nerve with the heads of the pronator teres muscle are indeed the most often reported situations predisposing to an entrapment.

A few authors have described even more uncommon anatomical variations at necropsy, discussing their potential role in causing a focal median nerve lesion. Dharp4 described a case showing an anomalous muscle arising from the humerus and crossing the median nerve and the brachial artery to blend with the common origin of the forearm flexor muscles. Nakatani et al7 reported a case in which a muscle slip from an anomalous four headed biceps brachii muscle joined the posterior fascia of the pronator teres forming a tunnel where the median nerve seemed to be compressed. At the forearm level the median nerve may be compressed by an anomalous palmaris longus muscle or in the hand by anomalous

Figure 1 Neurophysiological study: (A) motor and (B) sensory inching of the right median nerve across the site of conduction block; the drop of motor and sensory potentials at latencies 9.8 and 8.3 ms respectively corresponded to a stimulation site located along the nerve course about 9 cm proximal to a line between the biceps tendon and the medial epicondyle; recordings from the abductor brevis pollicis muscle by surface electrodes in (A) and from the third finger by ring electrodes in (B).
lumbral or thenar muscles; similar cases may involve the ulnar and the superficial radial nerves.

The pathophysiology of this type of lesion is mainly mechanical: a repeated and prolonged compression may develop either directly by the contracting muscle itself or by fixation against more rigid osteoligamentous tissues; the movements performed by our patient consisted in repeated and alternated elbow flexions and extensions under loading; in this setting the contracting muscle could also have reduced or blocked the longitudinal sliding of the nerve along its bed, with subsequent stretching and friction of the nerve trunk.7

In conclusion, this case emphasises that rare anatomical variations should be considered in the differential diagnosis of proximal median mononeuropathies at uncommon lesional sites.

This work was presented in abstract form at the annual meeting of the Italian Society of Clinical Neurophysiology Trieste, Italy, October 3–6 1998.

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Figure 2 Anatomical study. Top: T1 weighted MR axial images of the distal right upper arm across the lesional site; (A): proximal; (B): intermediate; (C): distal section. Left: surgical findings (D); brachialis muscle fibres covering the median nerve have been sectioned; note the anomalous deep course of the median nerve trunk (small white arrow) apart from the vascular bundle (large white arrow) and through the brachialis muscle belly (black arrow). See text for details.

The demonstration of a cyst enlargement over time may be of some importance, as it would provide additional evidence of an increased intracystic pressure, and that arachnoid cysts not merely represent passive accumulations of fluid as implied by the term “the temporal lobe agenesis syndrome”. With the exceptions mentioned above, results from very few patients have been published that show growth of an arachnoid cyst. We hereby report on one such patient.

An 18 year old man had CT at the age of 8 because of complaints thought to be caused by a sinusitis (a moderate transitory headache) and no other symptoms. It was then


Documented growth of a temporal arachnoid cyst

Most arachnoid cysts are probably present at birth, or develop soon after. Once they are formed, they are thought to remain stable, apparently in some kind of equilibrium with the rest of the intracranial space. Not infrequently, cysts have been reported to disappear spontaneously (for references see Wester and Hugdahl1) and a minority may grow with increasing age, although rather slowly.2 Occasionally, cysts in infants have been reported to grow to a substantial size. Kumagai et al.1 reported on a newborn boy who developed a temporal fossa cyst between the age of 2 and 4 months, which later increased considerably before it was removed when the patient was 8 months old. Except for the very smallest, most arachnoid cysts display radiological signs indicating an increased intracystic or intracranial pressure. For example, during infancy and early childhood, cysts may influence the shaping of the adjacent skull bone, in the case of middle fossa cysts resulting in an enlarged fossa, often with a bulging of the overlying bone. Moreover, middle fossa cysts may also dislocate the temporal lobe posteriorly, and larger cysts regularly cause a midline shift, thus indicating expansive forces.

This notion of raised intracystic and intracranial pressures is supported by the common intraoperative finding of a cyst wall bulging out of the dural incision. However, the relative paucity of associated symptoms, the moderate radiological displacement, the absence of perifocal oedema in the adjacent brain parenchyma, and, finally, the total intraoperative impression, all indicate that the pressure is only moderately increased.

It is a common clinical experience that the symptoms caused by an arachnoid cyst may first present after many years, and that the symptoms also may vary over time. Why this is so is not known, but it is tempting to suggest variations in the intracystic pressure as one explanation.

discovered that he had a relatively small arachnoid cyst in the left temporal fossa. The cyst did not reach above the sphenoidal wing or the pyramid (figure A and B). As we at that time were not yet aware of the cognitive impairment caused by most temporal cysts,1 we refrained from surgical decompression.

Ten years later, he was referred to us again, now complaining of a strong, episodic, frontal headache that had developed over the past year before the increased symptoms (mainly headache) and that the cystic growth in this patient must have been caused by an increased intracystic pressure that was sufficient to widen the sylvian fissure, and to dislocate the temporal lobe. In previous studies, it has been shown that this effect on the temporal lobe is sufficient to cause cognitive dysfunction, with postoperative improvement when the cyst is surgically decompressed.1 In our opinion, such findings alone may constitute a sufficient indication for surgery, but only if the complication rate can be kept at a negligible level.

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Pituitary apoplexy presenting as massive subarachnoid haemorrhage

Pituitary apoplexy is an uncommon, but well recognised clinical syndrome, which usually results from ischaemic or haemorrhagic necrosis of a pituitary adenoma.1 It is characterised by the abrupt onset of severe headache, visual impairment, ophthalmoplegia and often, a deteriorating level of consciousness.1 Signs of meningeal irritation are frequent accompaniments, which may confuse the clinical picture with that of a rysmal subarachnoid haemorrhage (SAH). We report a case of massive SAH caused by pituitary apoplexy and present the CT and MRI findings.

A 72 year old woman, with nothing in her history to suggest pituitary dysfunction, presented with the abrupt onset of severe headache, vomiting, and gradually deteriorating level of consciousness. A CT examination of the brain without contrast enhancement
showed an extensive basal subarachnoid haemorrhage that had diffused into both sylvian fissures and into the sulci over the convexity of the cerebral hemispheres. In addition there was a rounded heterogeneous density mass in the suprasellar cistern (fig 1 A). After the administration of contrast material the lesion displayed heterogeneous central enhancement (fig 1 B). A ruptured anterior communicating aneurysm was suspected but was excluded by normal cerebral angiography.

Brain MRI confirmed haemorrhage within a pituitary tumour (fig 2 A). It could also be seen that the haemorrhage had ruptured through a defect in the tumour capsule into the subarachnoid space (fig 2 B). Despite the administration of 100 mg hydrocortisone intravenously every 6 hours and cardiopulmonary support her condition progressively worsened and she died 3 days after admission.

The clinical syndrome of pituitary apoplexy evolves within hours to days. The symptoms vary from mild to severe and can progress rapidly to coma and death. Because many patients are unaware that they harbour a pituitary tumour, pituitary apoplexy is often unrecognised at presentation. In pituitary apoplexy, blood and necrotic tumour tissue are enclosed and compressed within the confined space of the sella turcica, a region that is in close anatomical proximity to the basal cisterns. When the pressure gradient within the sella exceeds the resistance of the surrounding structures, blood is expelled into the subarachnoid space producing a clinical picture that may be indistinguishable from aneurysmal SAH. Thus pituitary apoplexy must be included in the differential diagnosis of “angiographically negative” SAH. Brain CT is the modality of choice in the initial investigation of SAH. It will show the spread and severity of the haemorrhage within the subarachnoid space, as well as any extension into the brain. When pituitary apoplexy is the cause, CT will usually show the pituitary tumour as well as any recent haemorrhage. Brain MRI is superior to CT in identifying the tumour as well as the associated haemorrhage or infarction. In the case presented here, the enhanced MRI also displayed the defect in the tumour capsule which represented the site of rupture. The management of pituitary apoplexy includes the immediate administration of high dose corticosteroids to combat adrenal insufficiency. When there is rapid deterioration of vision or a progressively worsening level of consciousness, urgent surgery in the form of trans-sphenoidal decompression should be carried out.

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Early detection of non-compliance in Wilson’s disease by consecutive copper determination in cerebrospinal fluid

A 41 year old technical employee was diagnosed with Wilson’s disease in 1982, 2 years after onset of dysarthria, diplopia, visual deficits, ataxia, and concentration deficits. The patient improved rapidly with d-penicillamine and a copper free diet, and has since returned to normal neurological function. Penicillamine was stopped in 1989 and he changed his diet from copper free to a normal diet in 1987. In 1990 he was put on 800 mg zinc a day. During the past 17 years he underwent 20 determinations of copper concentration in CSF for follow up of treatment (figure) as copper concentrations in CSF can be used as an indicator of brain copper concentration in the cerebral manifestation of Wilson’s disease. 14 Copper was measured by flameless atomic absorption (Perkin Elmer, HGA 500, Überlingen, Germany). The main resonance line was 324.7 nm with deuterium background compensation and argon as a protective gas; the sample volume was 20 µl using an autosampling system. The CSF was measured undiluted. The patient was now again routinely admitted for monitoring of the efficiency of the treatment. He was free of complaints and the neurological examination as well as a neuropsychological test battery and visually evoked potentials were normal. He explicitly denied any change in diet or drug therapy (zinc, 800 mg a day). We found, however, an almost threefold increase of his CSF copper concentration compared with the previous values (figure). Serum
CORRESPONDENCE

Between will and action

I read with great interest the recent paper by Bundick and Spinella1 and the related commentary by Goldberg.2 These articles address the neurological substrates of volitional disturbance and in places they adopt the vocabulary of the philosophy of action—for example, Goldberg refers to the "will". However, their uses of self-related terms are mutually inconsistent and some clarification might assist in elucidating the functional anatomical relevance of the disorders described.

If we are to use the terms "will" and "action" then their use should be internally consistent. The "will" is that process that deliberates (consciously) on what is to be done, and the "action" is the performance, which follows it as something done "in action". It should be noted that the temporal sequence of this philosophical model of volition is substantially undermined by the classic EEG experiments of Libet et al on "intention".3 An "action" is consciously chosen; there is no such thing as an "involutionary action" (according to this model). Involutionary movements are movements not the intended actions of the agent ("the one who acts").4 It follows that the movements initiated by an "alien hand" may seem purposeful, but they are not actions (chosen by the patient). They are failures of action in so far as the patient cannot make the limb "behave". Hence, although Goldberg refers to the "will" being involved in action generation, his terminology is extrapolated inconsistently: he refers to alien hands performing "purposeful acts" and "involutionary acts"; the first is an attribute of an agent, the second is an oxymoron.

Bundick and Spinella, by contrast, refer to "involutionary motor activity" and "non-purposive" movements.5 These terms are coherent within the context of the "will" vocabulary being used.

The above points are not merely pedantic, as a case can be made for "action" and "agency" implicating different brain systems,6 and thus the volitional deficit demonstrated in each form of the alien hand syndrome may have some cognitive-neurobiological relevance.

In the medial-prefrontal and caudal forms of alien hand syndrome, the patients, although they have a failure of motor control, and an inability to impose their "will" on the alien limb, do not generally attribute alien agency to that limb—that is, they do not experience it as something done "in another". However, in the posterior alien hand syndrome, personal agency may be lost, and the limb experienced as belonging to someone else. Consider the case of Leiguarda et al,7 cited by neither Bundick and Spinella nor Goldberg.8 This alien limb (associated with ictal activity from a right parietal lesion) was experienced thus by the patient: "Suddenly I had a strange feeling on my left side; later I could not recognize the left arm as my own; I felt it belonged to someone else and wanted to hurt me because it moved towards me".9 This third form of alien hand syndrome has been referred to previously.10 The loss of agency it comprises is consistent with that alienation noted in "somatopsychomimic" by Critchley10 and is congruent with that attribution of agency to external forces so characteristic of schizophrenic "alien control"; itself associated with functional abnormality of the right parietal region.11

Hence, a consistent application of action terminology may help to elucidate the functional anatomical correlates of disorders of volition.

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Progressive dementia and gait disorder in a 78 year old woman

Although the provisional diagnosis of glosma-tosis cerebri in the clinico-pathological case conference by Tagliati et al was the one eventually validated at necropsy, the discussion should have also entertained the possibility that the occurrence of signal hyperintensity on MRI, in the context of dementia, ataxia, and Babinski’s sign could also be consistent with the diagnosis of cerebral amyloid angiopathy (with giant cell inflammatory reaction to B4-amyloid and vasculitis), exemplified by a 63 year old man presenting with some of these stigmata.1 The classic triad, consisting of cognitive impairment, upper motor neuron signs, and lobar haemorrhage,2 the third might well be a criterion potentially interchangeable with, or antedated by, amyloid related vasculitis and attendant stigmata such as focal non-specific hyperintensity on MRI.

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Guillain-Barré, Fisher, and Bickerstaff syndromes: nature versus well established ideas

As the author of the first ever report documenting central nervous system involvement in Miller Fisher syndrome, I beg permission to discuss certain aspects of the work of Yuki et al on Guillain-Barré syndrome and Bickerstaff's brainstem encephalitis, an example of which was published in this Journal. Twenty three years ago, I perused the literature in search of a diagnosis for a child of a family in Iran. Eyewitnessing a few case reports in the neurological heavens (Babinski's response, internuclear ophthalmoplegia, spasticity) I sailed the lore in search of a diagnosis for a patient with a midbrain lesion demonstrated by CT as an instance of Miller Fisher syndrome, hitherto a variant of Guillain-Barré syndrome; (b) that Bickerstaff's brainstem encephalitis and Miller Fisher syndrome are one and the same entity. With that perusal behind me, I thought it entirely sufficient to include Bickerstaff's work in my references and ended the article by the following statement: It is evident that our original paper, which was not significantly different from Fisher's brainstem encephalitis and Miller Fisher syndrome, is similar to that of Guillain-Barré syndrome. The reason we did not consider Bickerstaff's brainstem encephalitis to be a variant of Bickerstaff's brainstem encephalitis was explained as follows: (a) the existence of a pathological difference between the signal producing inflammation and presence of a lesion in conventional MRI to refute the existence of the disease; (b) the subject of normal appearing white matter in fact not normal may one day loom large here as it has in the case of multiple sclerosis.

Thus our novel observation of 1979 alleviated Fisher's "certain reluctance to upset well established ideas about the disease (Guillain-Barré syndrome)" and removed the stigma of "oddy" and "aberration" from the syndrome described by the two luminaries, Miller Fisher and Bickerstaff, who did not know of each other's contributions; nor could they have known of the fact that they were describing the same clinical entity. And for two good reasons—that is, sharing the above mentioned reluctance to upset the well established ideas and the presence of the disease in conventional MRI (as admitted by Fisher himself) and the wondrous wonder of computerised neuroimaging by a quarter of a century. It was left to the lineament observation in a 7 year old Persian girl, and its aftermath, for the facts to be gleaned—as depicted here.

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Yuki replies:
Derakhshan wrote "when Yuki et al draw any distinction between Fisher and Bickerstaff syndromes they are displaying a lack of historical perspective and paucity of clinical perspicuity which I am rectifying here, as this is an important area of neurology where the stakes are high and simple logic may not be the answer. I am this blurring of traditional border between certain maladies affecting the peripheral and central nervous system that is the thrust of what has followed our ground breaking observation, including the work of Yuki et al (whenever its eventual immunological import may be). The role of MRI in the ensuing events which sometimes resemble an eponymous war deserves a comment. Whereas Ropper and others mistakenly relied on the absence of a lesion in conventional MRI to refute the role of a central nervous system lesion in Miller Fisher Syndrome, instances are more cogently explained as follows: (a) the existence of a pathological difference between a signal producing inflammation and presence of a lesion in conventional MRI to refute the existence of the disease; (b) the subject of "normal appearing" white matter in fact is not normal may one day loom large here as it has in the case of multiple sclerosis.

Thus our novel observation of 1979 alleviated Fisher's "certain reluctance to upset well established ideas about the disease (Guillain-Barré syndrome)" and removed the stigma of "oddy" and "aberration" from the syndrome described by the two luminaries, Miller Fisher and Bickerstaff, who did not know of each other's contributions; nor could they have known of the fact that they were describing the same clinical entity. And for two good reasons—that is, sharing the above mentioned reluctance to upset the well established ideas and the presence of the disease in conventional MRI (as admitted by Fisher himself) and the wondrous wonder of computerised neuroimaging by a quarter of a century. It was left to the lineament observation in a 7 year old Persian girl, and its aftermath, for the facts to be gleaned—as depicted here.

and Guillain-Barré syndrome had been diagnosed clinically. Effective therapy for Bickerstaff’s brainstorm encephalitis has yet to be established. As shown, Bickerstaff’s brainstorm encephalitis and Guillain-Barré syndrome are closely related; therefore, steroids should not be used to treat these disorders. Instead, the established treatments—plasmapheresis and intravenous immunoglobulins (IVIg)—should be used to treat Bickerstaff’s encephalitis. We recommend that no steroids, rather IVIg (or plasmapheresis), be used to treat Bickerstaff’s brainstorm encephalitis. Controlled clinical trials are needed to establish the efficacy of these procedures as therapy for this disease.

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3 Fisher M. An unusual variant of acute idio

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pathology the lesson remains the same that in unwell patients IVIg should be used cautiously.

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Charles Bonnet syndrome: an example of cortical dissociation syndrome affecting vision?

Although Cole’s article was published some time ago, it was brought to our attention only recently during the weekly journal review by one of our senior house officers. Myself and the other neuroradiologists and colleagues are left with little doubt that the symptoms of visual hallucinations experienced by Cole is due to the Charles Bonnet syndrome (CBS).

This syndrome comprises the triad of visual hallucinations, visual sensory deprivations, and preserved cognitive status. The visual hallucinations in CBS may persist even with eye closure (unlike the visual hallucinations of hemianopia) and are often complex, vivid, and elaborate consisting of moving and colourful images. In epidemiological studies, two common factors for CBS were visual

Intravenous immunoglobulin causing reversible posterior leucoencephalopathy syndrome?

Turner and Wills describe a patient with the Miller Fisher syndrome treated with intravenous immunoglobulin (IVIg), who developed transient confusion and reversible blindness. The authors state that the bilateral occipital lobe changes seen on brain MRI were secondary to cerebral infarction. They postulate however that these may have occurred as a result of hyperviscosity, although at the time of the event the plasma viscosity was only marginally raised at 1.85 cp (normal range 1.5–1.72 cp). The images seem to show relative sparing of the cortex, which would be rather unusual if the cause was indeed an arterial infarct as would be expected if the mechanism was hyperviscosity induced thromboembolism. The authors do not specifically mention that they excluded a cerebral venous sinus thrombosis with appropriate imaging. However, the pattern and clinical history would be slightly unusual, this is a possibility that needs to be considered.

We suspect, however, that this patient actually experienced the reversible posterior leucoencephalopathy syndrome (rPLES). This is a syndrome of reversible symptoms comprising any of altered mental function; headaches; visual loss; seizures; and weakness which has been described with many underlying conditions4 and has previously been reported with IVIg use. The patient reported on has many of the clinical and radiological features of rPLES, in particular the MRI changes are predominantly subcortical and the vision recovered well. A repeat MRI in this case would be useful and would show resolution of the abnormalities seen on T2 weighted imaging with little or no corresponding T1 weighted abnormality, showing that the brain had been oedematous rather than infarcted. Reversible posterior leucoencephalopathy is an important syndromic diagnosis to make as it obviates the need for extensive stroke investigations and although the pattern and aetiology common to Bickerstaff’s brainstorm encephalitis and Fisher’s syndrome. J Neurol Sci 1999;168:118–23.

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Charles Bonnet syndrome: an example of cortical dissociation syndrome affecting vision?

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sensory deprivation typically affecting the anterior visual pathway (due to cataract or senile macular degeneration) and advanced age (older than 60 years). It is the hallucinatory symptoms in CBS that occur with preserved insight, these are not true but pseudohallucinations.

The syndrome occurs as a result of the dissociation between visual perception and visual sensory input in psychologically normal people. Functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) has shown that the hallucinations of colour, faces, textures, and objects in CBS correlate with the cerebral activity in the ventral extrastriate visual cortex whereas the cortical components reflect the functional specialisation of this region. In our experience, carbamazepine has been partially effective in suppressing the visual pseudohallucinations of CBS, presumably because it might affect ventral extrastriate neuronal activity in patients with CBS that persists between the attacks of hallucinatory symptoms.

In Cole’s case, the occipital infarct in the left hemisphere led to the dissociation between the visual sensory input (now limited to the right striate cortex) and the visual perception sense of the dominant extrastriate and the visual association cortex spared by the ischaemic event. Collicular vision (“blindsight”) plays no part in the symptoms of visual hallucination. In the light of the recent fMRI data, CBS may be considered as a visual dissociation syndrome similar to the cortical dissociation syndromes well recognised in the Geschwind model of language function. Cole gives one of the finest clinical examples to illustrate this phenomenon. CBS should occur with visual sensory deprivation exclusively in elderly people and not in young people is unknown but it might reflect the nature of neural plasticity in the visual cortex as opposed to the older cortical functions.

We were, however, a little surprised that CBS did not feature even once in the otherwise erudite discussion of the case reported in The Lancet by Cole and the reviewers of the journal—not consider this common diagnostic possibility?

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Corticobasal ganglionic degeneration and/or frontotemporal dementia?

I read with interest the recent paper by Mathuranath et al., describing two patients with the pathology of corticobasal ganglionic degeneration (CBD), the first presenting with the syndrome of frontotemporal dementia and the second with a mixed picture dominated by progressive aphasia. The concept that CBD may present with clinical features distinct from the “perceptuomotor” syndrome widely recognised as “classical” of the disorder is not new. However, until recently it had generally been thought that these cases represented the minority and thus could be considered “atypical”. However, knowledge about this disorder has evolved since our group and others reported the first large series. I think that in 2000 it is not appropriate to quote our 1994 book chapter stating that “Frank dementia or language dysfunctions are said to be rare and, if present, are mild, and typically occur late in the course of the disease,” as current wisdom. Within 2 years of that book chapter, ourselves and others were reporting alternative presentations for this pathology and most recently we have published the clinical-pathological correlation from the Canadian Brain Tissue Bank in a paper that was presumably in press at the time that the paper of Mathuranath et al was being reviewed.

In this study we found that of 13 patients reported pathologically to have CBD associated with cognitive impairment presented with cognitive or language disturbances, only one failed to show dementia during the course of the illness and only four were diagnosed as having CBD in life. Since that time, a 14th patient has come to necropsy whose presentation was that of primary progressive aphasia.

There have also been patients reported in the literature by ourselves and others with alternative manifestations of the disorder presenting with clinical features that were mistaken for the “classic” (but now it seems not the commonest) phenotype of CBD including progressive supranuclear palsy, Pick’s disease and primary progressive inclusion body dementia, Alzheimer’s disease, and familial frontotemporal dementia due to chromosomal abnormalities, tau positive inclusions.

In summary, clinical and pathological experience at the turn of the century strongly supports the conclusions of Mathuranath et al. Clinical phenotypes have not proved to be restricted to specific pathological substrates and several different clinical presentations may be caused by the same underlying pathology, probably largely dependent on the anatomical distribution of greatest involvement. Where I mainly take issue with the authors is in their belief which largely justifies their report, that a clear distinction between CBD and FTD is “currently accepted”. The cumulative literature since our 1994 review, most recently culminating in a monograph on a topic, indicates that CBD is no longer considered to be distinct and unrelated to frontotemporal dementia.

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Diagnostic criteria for corticobasal degeneration

The study of Mathuranath et al. of corticobasal ganglionic degeneration (CBD) and overlap with frontotemporal dementia (FTD) contributes interesting information to a controversial area of neurodegeneration. Unfortunately it also introduces a potentially confusing histopathological diagnostic error. The authors found oligodendroglial inclusions which they considered to be glial cytoplasmic inclusions and claimed that these, diagnostic hallmark of multiple system atrophy, have been described in other neurodegenerative diseases, including CBD. This is clearly not the case.

To support their view the authors refer to two papers reporting, among other cytoskeletal abnormalities, tau positive inclusions in oligodendroglial cells. A letter, published earlier in this journal, has also quoted in the current paper, has also claimed that glial cytoplasmic inclusions are not exclusive to multiple system atrophy. The evidence is now overwhelming that they are.

What the authors of this papers have described are indeed tau-positive oligodendroglial inclusions, but they are not the same as glial cytoplasmic inclusions. Oligodendroglial inclusions, chiefly coiled bodies, undoubtedly occur in various neurodegenerative diseases, including CBD, but their morphology and molecular pathology are different from those of glial cytoplasmic inclusions. Whereas glial cytoplasmic inclusions immunostain with antibodies to phosphorylated tau antibodies, the oligodendroglial inclusions seen in CBD and other neurodegenerative diseases are α-synuclein negative and give positive reaction with both phosphorylated and unphosphorylated tau antibodies. This basic difference has been recognised by a new classification of neurodegenerative disorders: CBD is one of the tauopathies, whereas multiple system atrophy is an α-synucleinopathy. Thus glial cytoplasmic inclusions remain the most consistent and reliable diagnostic hallmark of multiple system atrophy and do not occur in other neurodegenerative diseases.

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Xueerb and Hodges reply

The topic of how to apply the term “glial cytoplasmic inclusions” and their specificity to a particular disorder is clearly controversial and in a state of evolution. We used glial cytoplasmic inclusions in a non-specific way to indicate simply the presence of cytoplasmic inclusions in glial cells. We found these

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inclusions in subcortical oligodendrocytes. Glial inclusions were initially described in multiple system atrophy by Papp et al in 1989; their paper brought glial cellular pathology in neurodegenerative disease to the attention of neuropathologists. Cytoplasmic inclusions in glial cells have since been reported in various neurodegenerative diseases. The label “glial cytoplasmic inclusions” and the initials “GCIs” used in the general sense cannot, therefore, properly be regarded as pathognomonic of any single disease entity. Indeed, a neuroscientist without neuropathological training could conceivably misdiagnose tissue as coming from a case of multiple system atrophy if that tissue contained oligodendroglial cytoplasmic inclusions (in silver preparations or ubiquitin immunohistochemistry). Our paper does not, we would argue, contain a “histopathological diagnostic error” as suggested by Lantos.

On the other hand, Lantos’ criticism that we made no mention of recent discoveries of α-synuclein involvement in the biology of MS is justified. In the discussion, we should have made clear the fact that glial cytoplasmic inclusions in multiple systems atrophy, and so far only in multiple systems atrophy, are indeed α-synuclein-positive and phosphorylated tau negative, whereas the opposite is true for α-synuclein-positive and phosphorylated tau positive inclusions in multiple systems atrophy, and thus indeed contain α-synuclein. For medical treatment, dietary advice with strict sodium restriction is useful. However, betahistine probably helps more patients with Menière’s disease than any other drugs. Labyrinthine sedatives are also helpful in patients who have severe attacks of vertigo.

Surgical treatment of Menière’s disease treats only the vertigo, not the hearing loss. Various operations have been described, from grommet insertion to vestibular nerve section, all of which have had a similar degree of success, for these are particularly difficult to compare due to the huge variations in the natural history of the disease.

Assessment and treatment of patients with balance disturbance covers many specialties, who all approach the problem from slightly different angles with different perspectives. It is important to liaise closely with colleagues in associated specialties to optimise the diagnosis and treatment of these patients.

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Assessment and treatment of dizziness

In a recent editorial, Halmagyi and Cremer consider Menière’s disease in their discussion of recurrent spontaneous vertigo.1 Menière’s disease is a diagnosis of exclusion. Many conditions may present with the triad of hearing loss, vertigo, and tinnitus, most importantly vestibular schwannomas.2 Gadolinium enhanced MRI imaging is the current gold standard for diagnosing vestibular schwannoma and is mandatory before giving someone the diagnosis of Menière’s disease. The Committee on Hearing and Equilibrium of the American Academy of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery have set out guidelines for the diagnosis and evaluation of therapy in Menière’s disease.3

Audiovestibular testing can be useful in Menière’s disease.4 Caloric testing has poor sensitivity and specificity in diagnosing the disease.5 Electrocochleography and glycerol dehydration testing can be useful in the earlier stages of Menière’s disease when the hearing function is irreversibly and severely lost. In Menière’s disease, the most common findings on electrocochleography are an increased summating potential to action potential ratio, a widened superimposed potential on potential complex, and a disturbed cochlear microphonic potential.6

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Halmagyi and Cremer reply:
One cannot help but feel a certain sense of nostalgia reading Coatesworth’s textbook description of Menière’s disease: if only the real world was like that. We deal with his cases may indeed be the mode of presentation of recurrent spontaneous vertigo.1 Menière’s disease is a diagnosis of exclusion. Many conditions may present with the triad of hearing loss, vertigo, and tinnitus, most importantly vestibular schwannomas.2 Gadolinium enhanced MRI imaging is the current gold standard for diagnosing vestibular schwannoma and is mandatory before giving somebody the diagnosis of Menière’s disease. The correct answer is that if someone else is paying and the lawyers are watching anyone with any unilateral balance or hearing problem should have a gadolinium enhanced MRI in case they are harbouring what might eventually become a symptomatic intracanalicular vestibular schwannoma (“acoustic neuroma”); if the hearing loss actually does have one, then the problem becomes not so much the dizziness but what to do about the “tumour”. Vestibular schwannomas can, very rarely, present with, at the most two attacks of acute spontaneous vertigo if they can, rarely, present as sudden hearing loss.3 We see about 2500 new patients each year in our balance disorders clinic and in the past 15 years we have seen three patients with acute spontaneous vertigo who had small vestibular schwannomas.

Caloric testing has poor sensitivity and specificity in diagnosing Menière’s disease—In part it depends who does it. Technical standards for caloric testing are in general not as rigorously enforced as those for audiological testing. Some factors that can have a profound influence on the quality of the results include: (a) method of recording—DC electrocochleography versus infrared and video methods; (b) method of removing the noise; (c) method of removing the noise; and (d) method of removing the noise. Intra-tympanic gentamicin is a lot simpler and safer and might be just as good at stopping the vertigo but can worsen the hearing.5 Endolymphatic sac surgery? The controversy still rages.6

We certainly agree on the need for cooperation between specialties in the management of patients with dizziness. Neurologists need to work with otolaryngologists who have expertise and interest in otology. The neurologists of Leeds should know how lucky they are to have one.


BOOK REVIEWS


Cranial Base Surgery is a multi-authored textbook with internationally recognised contributors from Europe and the United States of America. The stated aim of the editors is to collate the experience of skull base surgeons to provide a framework of the contemporary management of skull base lesions including surgical techniques and outcome data. However, because of the rarity of some of the lesions, the authors admit that long term data on their outcomes are not yet available, which precludes definitive statements about the best management plans.

The book is divided into four sections dealing initially with presentation and diagnosis and sequentially with the surgical approaches, pathological conditions and finally with adjuvant therapy for cranial base tumours. Each section on general considerations concentrates on neuroimaging, interventional neuroradiology, neurophysiological monitoring, and neuroanaesthesia. The chapter on cranial nerve anatomy is excellent and certainly for this reviewer provided a useful revision exercise.

The chapters dealing with surgical approaches to the cranial base will be most useful to those who are in training rather than providing any new information to those who already have an established practice, although it does provide a logical overview of the different approaches.

The mark of a good operative text is whether, when one has read and digested it, one would have the confidence to undertake the procedure. For experienced surgeons the answer would be yes but for those in training the text is too unsupported by the quality of the illustrations. These are largely black and white and have been executed by different artists, which gives them a non-uniform appearance. The intraoperative photographs are unsatisfactory; for example, a picture of a juvenile nasopharyngeal angiofibroma was unrecognisable.

The third section comprises 13 chapters relating to the individual surgical pathology of tumours and vascular lesions. In these cases there is repetition of the material alluded to in the surgical approaches section. Despite this the translamellar subfrontal approach was not described either in the surgical approaches section or in the chapter on olfactory groove meningiomas.

The chapters on surgical pathology would have benefited from having standard subheadings which would have simplified access to specific information such as that relating to outcome data. In the chapter by Jennetta and Resnick on magnetic resonance imaging the authors' textbook, reviewed in an earlier edition of this Journal, and is required reading throughout the video. An auditory commentary has been easier to follow. For future editions, a quiz type session at the end of the video might also be a useful training exercise.

Despite these reservations, this is a good training video and I recommend it.

SIMON BONIFACE


This book by Bill Freed summarises the field of neural transplantation and as might be expected from this author the approach is somewhat different. Bill Freed has worked with the original scientists involved with the early pioneering work on neural transplants especially in the experimental exploration of adrenal medullary transplants in Parkinson's disease. He is not to be confused with the controversial surgeon Curt Freed, the principal investigator of the recent double blinded embryonic nigral grafts trial in Parkinson's disease. This book is written by one who saw the world develop out of a problem, the origins into the clinical domain, and as such should be capable of providing the reader with a balanced rationale to neural transplantation. Unfortunately, it fails to do this because it often rambles off into quasiphilosophical topics, which is a shame as it underlines much that could be gleaned from this tome.

The book begins with a preface which sets the tone of the rest of the book, concluding with a rather odd quotation from The jigsaw man by Larry Niven. The book then leads through a series of introductory chapters which includes a list of conditions that may be suitable for transplantation. This list rather extraordinarily contains schizophrenia but other more sensible candidates such as motor neuron disease or cerebellar degenerations do not make an appearance at all. Immersed in this early section of the book is chapter 7 which discusses neural transplants in terms of changes in personality. Although this is of interest it is clearly out of place in an introductory book such as this, not least because it confuses in the readers mind the notion of selective grafts for neurodegenerative conditions with the ludicrous head transplants that some have advocated. Thus the book has the potential to lead the uninstructed to think that the ultimate goal of neural transplantation is brain replacement rather than brain repair. The book thereafter returns to more logical and better balanced approach but sadly detours at the end into dangerous waters once again with a misjudged final concluding chapter.

In summary, the book contains much of interest but presents it in a fashion that makes it difficult to recommend. So for those wanting an introduction to the subject of neural grafting this is not the book to read, because of its eclectic approach. To those familiar with the field, it represents an interesting
diversion, but is deeply irritating in parts and creates a sense of confusion as to where Bill Freed thinks the field is going—a situation at variance with those actively involved in the field.

ROGER BARKER


The editors of this short book have drawn together the Proceedings of the 6th International Symposium on Mechanisms of Secondary Brain Injury: Emerging Novel Developments, which was held in Maials/Sterzing, Italy in February 1998. It takes the form of a supplement for Acta Neurochirurgica, which traditionally contributed significantly to the subject.

The chapters covered are variable, written by multiple authors from different nations. They address both the experimental and clinical aspects of brain injury in ischaemia, touching on modern concepts. They are organised under the headings of molecular and cellular mechanisms, cerebral ischaemia, and remaining problems in severe head injury. Each chapter provides comprehensive up to date references.

Although clinical issues are touched on, the general theme of the book is promoting novel ideas in experimental brain ischaemia and their potential extrapolation into the clinical field. As such, it is of great interest to those involved in the experimentation of cerebral trauma and ischaemia, and to those clinicians with a very high subspeciality interest in this arena. Although most of the chapters are of high calibre, those addressing mechanisms of secondary mitochondrial failure, molecular signals for glial activation, gene expression, and recovery from cerebral ischaemia and modelling of the ischaemic penumbra I found particularly informative.

PJ KIRKPATRICK


This large single volume textbook has almost 30 contributors. Many chapters are written by more than one person, but one of the editors has personally contributed almost a third of the text, including the first 11 chapters on "physical principles": computed tomography (60 pages) and magnetic resonance imaging (350 pages). The remainder of the book is divided into four sections. "Clinical principles: normal anatomy and variants" consists of one chapter on "normal variations of the skull and its contents", with 95 figures, but not a single skull radiograph or any reference to anomalies of the cerebral vasculature. There are 15 on "brain and skull", rather heavily weighted towards children, which is perhaps not surprising given that the first editor is one of America's foremost paediatric neuroradiologists. The five chapters making up the "orbits, paranasal sinuses, and skull base" are distinctly disappointing, at least two probably better skipped over. The second of the seven chapters on "spine" is a rather superficial review of myelography, which to a European also seems anachronistic (although I am assured that many myelograms are still carried out in the United States for medicolegal reasons, which seems perverse!). The author claims that "in older patients, who generally have considerable cervical spondylosis and thoracic kyphosis, the C1–2 injection technique is preferred". Leaving aside the agist slur on elderly Americans, many experienced neuroradiologists would firmly reject this.

Curiously, there are no corresponding chapters on sonography or cerebral or spinal angiography, although chapter 23, "Interventional neuroradiology", is written so as to suggest that the authors thought the latter topics would be covered elsewhere. Bizarrely, however, the chapter on "hemorrhage" in the principles of MRI section, offers "tips" on angiographic diagnosis of intracranial haemorrhage! Chapter division is rather idiosyncratic throughout, so that, for example, inflammatory disease of the spinal cord is dealt with under "brain and skull", whereas inflammatory spinal column disease comes 500 pages later. There is significant repetition, two contributors illustrating a metopic suture, and Alzheimer's disease crops up in about a dozen different places.

In the 1980s, postgraduate students often sought a recommendation for a single volume neuroradiology textbook. Now there is a handful to choose from, and it is difficult to pick a winner: most, like this one, have merits and failings, some to a greater degree. The choice might be guided by the space left on that quasitheoretical "departmental shelf"; at £124 for a very well produced radiology book, "Neuroimaging" is not unduly expensive.

Another text, recently published with the same title, was more obviously oriented towards that no man's land between neuroradiology and neurology which in Europe is usually referred to as "neuromaging". This one is very definitely a neuroradiology text: "Neuroimaging and nuclear medicine" is relegated (appropriately, some would say) to the back of the book, although there are some appalling graphics in chapter 14, and the legends of some figures in chapter 19 do not say what conditions they show). My favourite thing is figure 11.95. The caption, which I quote in its entirety, similarly does not draw attention to the specific radiological features, and one can only wonder whether the author is setting some heartfelt score. "This is a coronal CT scan of a thick-skinned 73-year-old retired businessman!"

1. S MOSELY


In a suitably resourced healthcare system it is no longer acceptable for children to receive neurosurgical care from a surgeon who only occasionally dabbles with "small adults". Those who provide paediatric neurosurgical care must understand the differences between the developing nervous system and the degenerating one that our adult colleagues have to deal with. Likewise it is no longer appropriate to add the odd chapter on children onto a predominantly adult textbook. This multiauthor textbook is therefore welcome, although the style of any section that paediatric neurosurgery is carried out.

It is in competition with two other multi-author textbooks, all unimaginatively called "Pediatric Neurosurgery". For the next edition I would advise the publishers to create some distance from the other two by spelling the title properly, for the main difference between this book and the others is that it is predominantly European in its authorship and style, whereas the others are almost exclusively North American. All three books are comprehensive and well written by leaders in the field and the differences between them are predominantly of style. The North American books I find a little too businesslike, being the type of books you just want to look things up in. This European book conveys the same information in a more relaxed style which I find informative, entertaining, and more readable than the competition.

I think that an institution performing paediatric neurosurgery should have all three books in the department. An individual practicing or planning a career in paediatric neurosurgery should have at least one, the choice being dependent on which style suits that person. Before being asked to review this volume I had already purchased all three. The American books I keep in my office where I can easily consult them for the odd fact or reference. This book stays on our children's ward where its style encourages all staff to pick it up and enjoyably read about the conditions they are treating.

PETER RICHARDS


People with multiple sclerosis feel deprived of information about their condition, which is most acute just after formal diagnosis and early in the course of the disease. This new edition of the American question and answer book is published within weeks of a similar, but shorter, publication from Robinson et al in the United Kingdom.

The book, edited by a clinical psychologist, contains chapters written by specialists, including neurologists, physiotherapists and occupational therapists, speech pathologists, psychologists, nurses, financial advisers, employment experts, and lawyers, some of whom are themselves people with multiple sclerosis. It uses team work to formulate and answer hundreds of potential questions which are raised in an information oriented society in which it is often hard to know which information to trust it promises to be 'trustworthy, factual and honest'.

The problem with such texts is that the individual questions never seem precisely correct for the individual patient and, despite the chapter headings, it is difficult to find any specific question; questions on treatment, for example, appear in the chapter on neurology, treatment, physical therapy,
and sexuality. None the less, it provides reasonable, comprehensive, and factual answers and does not show the bias of many current internet information services. It is North American in style and content and the useful appendix on resources has little relevance outside the continental United States. It provides information for people with multiple sclerosis and would be useful in a multiple sclerosis resource centre in the United Kingdom provided that the people with multiple sclerosis who use it remember the advice from Dr Schapiro in the forward with multiplicity who use it remember that “it is no substitute for talking with your health professional”.

DAVID BATES


The role of sex steroids in neurological disease is a topic of importance in our aging population and very worthy of discussion. This book is set out in chapters focusing on different individual subspecialties, including dementia, vascular disease, and epilepsy, with an initial backdrop of basic science followed by a discussion of clinical studies and observations. The chapters are concise and well illustrated with pathological material, photographs, and bright flow diagrams. They provide an informative introduction to the field, but lack depth of discussion in clinical applications. Study findings are often summarised in histogram format, but lack confidence intervals, thus limiting the visual interpretation of data. Studies summarised in figures and tables are numerically referenced and thus do not instantly draw the reader to named research groups whose material would be of further interest.

As a clinician the discussion of dementia caught my interest and the argument for detailed controlled trials of oestrogen in Alzheimer’s disease seemed most compelling, perhaps reflecting the author’s clear interest in this field.

Overall, this is a relatively light read which serves as an excellent introduction to the field, easily accessible to medical students and junior neuroscientists. I think that it would be a worthy addition to the university library, but the text lacks sufficient meatiness to inspire purchase by the individual neurologist.

N J GIFFIN

KIRSTY HARKNESS


There exists a wide discrepancy between the excitement of recent advances in the pathophysiology of headache, including the neurovascular hypothesis of migraine, serotonergic receptor pharmacology, and knowledge of the involvement of brainstem structures in head pain, and the often low level of enthusiasm for headache management in the United Kingdom. In this volume Mongini presents a personal view of headache and facial pain aetiology and management which complements other researchers in the field.

The first section concentrates on the importance of facial, cervical, and masticatory muscles in the aetiology of headache with some excellent anatomical illustrations. Reference is also made to serotonergic mechanisms in migraine but this could have been expanded to include a more current view of the neurovascular hypothesis of migraine and also a discussion of calcium channelopathies in the pathogenesis of migraine.

The second clinical section describes in detail the examination of the muscles of mastication including palpation of trigger points and recognition of bite abnormalities. This section would have benefited from more discussion of the features of secondary headaches, altered intracranial pressure syndromes, the importance of vascular risk factors in migraine assessment, and unusual variants of migraine such as familial hemiplegic migraine. Mongini includes many clear photographs of patients with abnormalities of masticatory muscles and tension related symptoms to illustrate his points.

The chapters on management of headache are based around case discussions, with an emphasis on physical therapy for the cervical and masticatory muscles and on treatment of comorbidity of depression as being paramount to successful therapy. Whereas the recognition of concurrent depression cannot be over emphasised in its importance it would have been useful to include a comments on the stepwise approach to migraine therapy and a guide to the use of triptans. Perhaps the most obvious omission in this section is a discussion of chronic daily headaches with analgesic misuse, probably the most common problem seen in headache clinics.

This book should be used as an adjunct to other headache texts on the market to give the reader an insight into a management strategy for those patients with challenging and unusual headache problems.
The rostrocaudal gradient for somatosensory perception in the human postcentral gyrus

K TAKE DA, K TAKE DA, Y SHOZAWA, M SONOO, T SHIMIZU and T KAMINAGA

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