Muscle cramp is difficult to diagnose in a community survey. The criteria we used, however, were fairly stringent. The proportion of the adult population of The Netherlands that had at least a single muscle cramp in 1988 was estimated at 36%. This high incidence agrees with empirical data from previous studies. Occurrence of cramp may thus be considered as nothing unusual in otherwise healthy adults. Age adjusted incidence ratios showed a 3.2 female preponderance, which was not accounted for by pregnancy associated muscle cramp, as women beyond childbearing age were particularly affected (table). Age had little effect on the proportion of the population suffering. Nevertheless, older people suffering from cramp had attacks more often than younger people (data not shown). At any age, muscles in calves (84%) and feet (39%) were most often affected. Men showed a slight tendency for cramp in calves (59 v 78%) and arms and hands (25% v 11%) whereas women more often suffered from cramp in feet and toes (53 v 25%). Wearing high heeled shoes may be part in account for this. Pregnancy was the most important risk factor predisposing to muscle cramp (odds ratio 6.3; 95% confidence interval 1.0 to 38.6). Musculoskeletal pain and stiffness also correlated with muscle cramp (2.8; 1 to 7.2). Irritation from dried, overloaded, or overextended joints, tendons, or muscles may provoke cramp. Subjects with generalised muscle twitching and fasciculations are prone to developing cramp. In our survey, however, the correlation between fasciculations and muscle cramp was insignificant (1.6; 0.9 to 2.8).

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3 Hall A J. Cramp and salt balance in ordinary life. Lancet 1947;i:231-3

Table of incidence of at least one muscle cramp in Dutch adults in 1988

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-39 yrs</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-59 yrs</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60+ yrs</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


This well known annual round-up of neurosurgical topics has continued since 1902. An invaluable guide to advances and trends; the individual reader's preference rests with his assessment of the articles selected, the adequacy of the abstract, and the presentation. Once again the Year Book seems to have forgotten nothing of significance. The skill required to produce such intelligible, readable abstracts and commentaries is self-evident.

Thepreface recordsthe sad passing of Russell De Jong on August 21, 1990: "In northern Michigan there was a most unusually beautiful shimmering display of northern lights . . . it was not hard to believe, as probably the Indians did, . . . that there was a minor celestial event, perhaps a signal of some happening, such as the death of a great chief."

With such touches, it is irresistible.

J M S PEARCE


As the editors of this multi-author text rightly point out much of the early work on cerebral localisation was based on study of patients with cerebrovascular lesions. The title of this volume might lead one to expect an update on this but, in fact, it covers a much wider field. There is a good section on cerebrovascular pathophysiology, blood flow, metabolism and imaging. There follows an overview of the clinical situation including epidemiology, the relationship with cardiac disease and a summary review of current management.