Cerebral metabolism during vegetative state and after recovery to consciousness

One way to approach the study of consciousness is to explore lesional cases in which impairment of consciousness is the prominent clinical sign. Vegetative state is defined as a vegetative state that has continued or endured for at least 1 month. We present a patient who developed a vegetative state after carbon monoxide poisoning and in whom we had the opportunity to measure brain glucose metabolism distribution during the vegetative state and after recovery to consciousness. Using [F]fluorodeoxyglucose (FDG) PET and statistical parametric mapping (SPM) we compared both patient's sets to a normal control population. Our findings offer an insight into the neural correlates of “awareness”, pointing to a critical role for posterior associative cortices in consciousness.

A 40 year old right handed woman attempted suicide through CO intoxication and was found unconscious. She was treated with hyperbaric oxygen but evolved to a vegetative state, in which involvement of the posterior associative cortices is reported as a critical neuroanatomical substrate and with PET studies in postanoxic syndrome, in which the parieto-occipital cortex showed the most consistent impairment. The functions of these areas are manifest: lateral parietal areas are involved in spatial perception and attention, working memory, mental imagery, and language, whereas the precuneus is activated in episodic memory retrieval, modulation of visual perception by mental imagery, and attention. Our data point to a critical role for these posterior associative cortices in the emergence of conscious experience.

STEVEN LAUREYS
CHRISTIAN LEMAIRE
PIERRE MAQUET
Cyclotron Research Centre, University of Liège, Sart Tilman, 4000 Liège, Belgium

CHRISTOPHE PHILLIPS
Institute of Cognitive Neurology, University College London, Alexandra House, 17 Queen Square, London WC1N 3AR, England, UK

GEORGE FRANCK
Department of Neurology, CHU Liège Sart, Tilman B-33, 4000 Liège, Belgium

Correspondence to: Dr Pierre Maquet, Cyclotron Research Centre (B30), University of Liège, Sart Tilman, 4000 Liège, Belgium Telephone 0032 43 66 36 87; fax 0032 43 66 29 46; email maquet@pet.crc.ac.be

Electrical inexcitability of nerves and muscles in severe infantile spinal muscular atrophy

Spinal muscular atrophy (SMA) is one of the most common fatal autosomal recessive disorders, characterised by progressive degeneration of anterior horn cells. Before the advent of genetic testing, the diagnosis of SMA was based on clinical, histopathological, and electrophysiological features. In 1992, the International SMA Consortium defined diagnostic criteria of proximal SMA based on clinical findings. In SMA type I (severe; Werdnig-Hoffmann disease), affected persons have onset of symptoms before 6 months of age and are never able to sit without support. Electromyography demonstrates denervation features. In early 1995, the candidate gene, the survival motor neuron (SMN) gene, was identified, making the confirmation of SMA by DNA analysis possible.

With the availability of a genetic test for SMA, many investigators are refining the diagnostic criteria published by the Consortium. Studies involving hundreds of patients with SMA have disclosed a subset of patients who fulfil at least one exclusion criterion defined by the Consortium. We identified an infant with severe SMA who fulfilled two exclusion criteria and also showed inexcitability of all nerves as well as muscles. This report will further delineate the wide range of phenotypes for this particular gene mutation.

A 2-month-old male infant was born at term. From birth he had no movements, no extensor movements were noted at 13 weeks of gestation. Chorionic villus sampling at 10 weeks of gestation disclosed normal chromosomal decreases. Decreased fetal movement and polyhydramnios were noted at about 34 weeks of gestation. At delivery, the infant was cyanotic with no respiratory effort and was subsequently intubated. On physical examination, the infant had no spontaneous movements. He opened his eyes with brief fixation but no following. Tongue fasciculations were present. Other cranial nerves seemed intact. Mild flexion contractures of both elbows, knees, and ankles were noted. Tone was flaccid in both upper and lower limbs, and there was no movement response to painful stimulus. Deep tendon reflexes were absent.

Brain MRI disclosed mild diffuse cortical atrophy. His EMG was severely abnormal, with widespread fibrillations and absent voluntary motor units except in the genioglossus, where mildly neurogenic motor units with decreased recruitment were seen. Stimulation of the median, ulnar, tibial, and peroneal nerves with a maximal stimulus resulted in no clinical or electrical response. The biceps brachii and rectus femoris muscles were electrically inexcitable by direct needle stimulation. Median, ulnar, and sural sensory potentials were not obtainable. DNA testing showed a homozygous deletion of exons 7 and 8 of the telomeric SMN gene, all three siblings showed a large deletion in the region that includes all alleles of the multi-copy markers Agk-1C and C212, localised at the 5’ end of the two SMN gene copies. It has been postulated that the severity of disease may be correlated to the extent of a deletion involving the SMN gene and the multicity markers. The infant in our report with SMA type I showed electrical inexcitability of motor nerves as well as the characteristic alteration of the SMN gene.

Although it has been known for some time from histological studies that sensory systems are involved in SMA, electrophysiological sensory findings have been previously reported only once. Sensory nerve conduction velocity was tested in an infant with severe SMA and showed no recordable potential, but the infant in our report also exhibited universal absence of sensory potentials. In both cases, DNA analysis disclosed the 5q deletion. It is unclear whether this finding represents a distinct entity or merely the severe end of classic Werdnig-Hoffmann disease. The diagnostic criteria produced by the International SMA Consortium currently lists “absence of recordable sensory potential” as an exclusion criterion. Our finding of absent sensory potentials in a 5q deletion established case of SMA indicates further need for revision of the Consortium criteria. Studies involving larger groups of patients with SMA have identified cases of SMA variants. These patients were diagnosed as infantile SMA by the presence of proximal weakness and atrophy, hypotonia, and evidence of neuromuscular alterations in EMG and muscle biopsy. In addition, these patients also exhibited one of the exclusion criteria defined by the Consortium—for example, diaphragmatic weakness, involvement of the CNS, or arthrogryposis. Although these patients did not show the typical SMN deletion and were therefore probably not linked to chromosome 5q, they could have had point mutations. The infant in our report showed no respiratory effort after birth, indicating diaphragmatic weakness. He did, however, possess the characteristic SMN gene alterations. This finding suggests that diaphragmatic weakness should be reconsidered as an exclusion criterion by the Consortium.

Review of the literature disclosed no previous reports of electrically inexcitable muscles in SMA. This phenomenon is known to occur in a few other neuromuscular conditions such as periodic paralysis and critical illness polyneuropathy. Fibrillations, as seen in the infant in our report, are commonly seen in acute denervation and are thought to be caused by perturbation of the sarcocellular membrane, rendering it unstable. One possibility may be the type seen in denervation in SMA type I can result in abnormal function of the membrane to make it electrically inexcitable. Further electrophysiological studies at the cellular level are required to delineate this interesting finding.

Alicia A Kuo
Department of Pediatrics
Stefan M Puls
Dawn S Eliashev
Cameron R Adams
Division of Neurophysiology, Cedars Sinai Medical Center, Los Angeles, CA, USA
Correspondence to: Dr Cameron R Adams, Department of Neurophysiology, Cedars Sinai Medical Center, 8631 West Third Street, Room 1145, East Tower, Los Angeles, CA 90048, USA.
the peripheral conversion of levodopa into
V
can be assumed that the e
unresponsive pupils and without signs of dys-
toxication with maximally dilated, light
knowledge, this association of a levodopa
plasma levodopa concentration. To our
knowledge, this association of a levodopa
plasma of 16.7 hours. A very noticeable feature of this
patient was 66 763 ng/ml, the concentrations
of DOPAC, homovanillic acid, noradren-
aline, adrenaline, and dopamine. The time
course of the concentrations of levodopa and
3-o-methyldopa are shown in the figure.

After 24 hours the patient was moved from
the intensive care unit to a normal medical
ward. At this point no neuropsychiatric signs
of levodopa intoxication could be detected. Clinically, the most prominent symptoms of
levodopa overdose are confusion, agitation,
sleeplessness, and excessive motor activity.
The initial levodopa concentration in our
patient was 66 763 ng/ml, the concentrations
of DOPAC, homovanillic acid, noradren-
aline, adrenaline, and dopamine were raised
2.5 hours after ingestion and rapidly returned
to normal. A very noticeable feature of this
case was the maximal bilateral mydriasis, with
absent light reaction, at the time of the maxi-
mal intoxication with a 30-fold increase in
plasma levodopa concentration. To our knowledge, this is the first report of a levodopa
intoxication with maximally dilated, light
unresponsive pupils and without signs of dys-
ketiniasis which has not previously been reported. It can be clearly shown that the effect is caused
by the peripheral conversion of levodopa into
noradrenaline, which stimulates α-adrenergic
receptors in the dilator iridis. There is no indication from animal experiments of a spe-
cific activation of dopamine receptors.1 The
arterial hypertension measured initially can
also be attributed to the high systemic
concentrations of noradrenaline, and the
tachycardia to the raised concentrations of
adrenaline and dopamine. As seen in the fig-
ure, the only indicator which can show a
levodopa intoxication in the subacute stage is
the concentration of 3-o-methyldopa. The
metabolite 3-o-methyldopa results from the
oxidation of levodopa, which explains the
delayed peak of the 3-o-methyldopa concen-
tration. The half-life of 3-o-methyldopa in
plasma was calculated at 16.7 hours in this
patient. On the other hand, the plasma half-
life of levodopa was 111 minutes; this is
slightly longer than normal, and can be
explained by assuming a rate limited metabo-
lim of levodopa when the substrate concen-
tration for the enzymes metabolising it is
raised.

Distribution into muscles rather then
metabolism may largely determine the plasma
half life of levodopa and explain why this
was only slightly altered with overdose.
The measured peak concentration of 66 763
ng/ml is about 30 times higher than the peak
concentration to be expected after taking one
tablet of carbidopa/levodopa (50 mg/200
mg). It is apparent that the 30 tablets did not
interfere with absorption or lead to a gastro-
intestinal paralysis due to the high dose of
levodopa; the relation between amount in-
gested and plasma concentration seems to be
linear, at least in this dose range.

We conclude from these findings that in
cases of suspected levodopa intoxication some
hours previously, it could be important to
measure the concentration of 3-o-
methyldopa, so as not to overlook an
overdosage with levodopa, which may be due
to a suicide attempt. In addition to the diag-
nostic uncertainty in relation to the immedi-
ate treatment of the patient, this would also
have an effect on further psychiatric and psy-
chological therapy.
risperidone. This was started at a dose of 1mg twice daily, increasing to a dose of 1mg four times a day over a period of 2 weeks, stopped after a brief period. He developed hypotension (blood pressure 100/60 mm Hg), complaining of dizziness after the initial dose. His blood pressure remained stable, although low, after this and as there was improvement in his movements the drug was continued. However, he decided to stop the risperidone after 4 months because of his subjective experience of slowed thinking and occasional dizziness. A repeated trial of sulpiride was carried out in March 1997. Sulpiride was started at 1mg twice a day and increased to a total daily dose of 1000 mg over 2 weeks. He was on sulpiride for 4 weeks with no improvement in his movements, so it was discontinued. The patient continued to experience low mood and after the discontinuation of sulpiride, his antidepresant drug was changed to lofepramine commencing at 70 mg once a day and increasing after a few days to 140 mg daily. There were no changes noted in his movements during this change.

Although the patient was subjectively unaware of the extent of his movements his everyday life continued to be affected. The social venues he felt able to attend were becoming more limited and activities he wanted to pursue such as travelling abroad by air were problematic. A trial of olanzapine was then instituted. He was started on 5 mg a day in the mornings and 20 mg at night and 20 mg paroxetine daily; 04/97: 400 mg sulpiride in the mornings 600 mg at night and 20 mg paroxetine daily; 03/97; before retriol sulpiride, 20 mg paroxetine daily; 04/97: 400 mg sulpiride in the mornings 600 mg at night and 20 mg paroxetine daily; 05/96: before risperidone, 20 mg paroxetine daily; 07/96: 1 mg risperidone four times daily and 20 mg paroxetine daily; 03/97; before retriol sulpiride, 20 mg paroxetine daily; 04/97: 140 mg olanzaprine at night and 20 mg lofepramine daily.

Patient characteristics

Quantitative neurological examination scores showing the progress of the movement disorder. 06/95: before trial sulpiride, no medication; 05/96: before risperidone, 20 mg paroxetine daily; 07/96: 1 mg risperidone four times daily and 20 mg paroxetine daily; 03/97; before retriol sulpiride, 20 mg paroxetine daily; 04/97: 400 mg sulpiride in the mornings and 20 mg paroxetine daily; 06/97: 5 mg olanzapine at night, 140 mg lofepramine daily.

Score

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Patient</th>
<th>Age at surgery</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Years with PD</th>
<th>H and Y*</th>
<th>UPDRS off/ on pallidotomy/pot-pallidotomy</th>
<th>Pallidotomy side</th>
<th>Transient side effects</th>
<th>Medication additional to levodopa</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2/5</td>
<td>57/NP†</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>Slight facial paresis, swallowing problems, drooling</td>
<td>Trypriprox, temazepam, alprazolam, apomorphine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2/2.5</td>
<td>22†</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>Slight dysarthria</td>
<td>Trihexifenidyl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2/3</td>
<td>55/15</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>Facial paresis</td>
<td>Periglide, amantadine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2/2</td>
<td>45/22</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>Slight dysarthria</td>
<td>Selegeline, biperiden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2.5/4</td>
<td>69/36</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>Facial paresis, hypophonia</td>
<td>Perglide, selegeline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2.5/3</td>
<td>48/27</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>Facial paresis, aphasia</td>
<td>Selegeline, biperiden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2.5/4</td>
<td>55/NP</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>facial paresis</td>
<td>Clozapine, temazepam, cisapride</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*H and Y=Hoehn and Yahr; †UPDRS off=unified Parkinson’s disease rating scale part 3 (motor examination), in a standardised off state, 12 hours without antiparkinson medication; NNP=not performed.

**Transient hiccups after posteroventral pallidotomy for Parkinson’s disease**

Hiccup is defined as an abrupt intermittent, involuntary, contraction of the diaphragmatic and external (inspiratory) intercostal muscles, with inhibition of expiratory intercostal activity. This results in a sudden inspiration, abruptly opposed by closure of the glottis. This results in a sudden inspiration, abruptly opposed by closure of the glottis. The principal site of interaction of the hiccup discharge with other descending nerves to the respiratory muscles is the nucleus ambiguus, which may explain clinical differences in outcome when comparing different antipsychotic drugs.

This case report indicates that olanzapine may be a useful addition to the treatments for movement disorder, for some patients, and controlled trials of its use in Huntington’s disease would be welcome.

HEATHER C DIPPLE
Department of Psychiatry, Leicester Royal Infirmary, University of Leicester, London, UK. Telephone 0044 1509 670774.

localisation. Patients started with a short schedule of corticosteroids (5 days) the night before surgery.

The hiccups started immediately after the operation or the next day were intermittent, and the bouts of hiccup of six patients, with a duration of hours, resolved within 3 days after the procedure. One patient complained of yawning more often and frequent bouts of hiccup for 6 months.

Five patients were men. All patients were right handed. The mean age at surgery was 54 years and the mean duration of Parkinson’s disease was 12 years. All patients were taking levodopa. In four patients the hiccups appeared after a left sided pallidotomy. Patient 2 had a right sided thalamotomy 4 years before the pallidotomy. Patient 5 underwent a left sided pallidotomy 10 months before the right sided pallidotomy which caused the hiccups. The pallidotomies improved parkinsonism in the “off” state (table). Contralateral dyskinesias, and pain accompanying Parkinson’s disease. Six patients had transient adverse events: four patients had a transient facial paresis postoperatively and two a slight transient dysarthria. Two patients had choreatic movements after the pallidotomy at the contralateral which resolved spontaneously within 2 days and is associated with a favourable surgical outcome.

Postoperative MR scans were obtained in the first six patients, and showed that in five patients the lesions were located in the posterior part of the globus pallidus pars externa (GPe) and interna (figure). In patient 5 the lesion was situated slightly more anterior in the GPe and putamen. In patient 3 there was a small separate lesion more dorsal, probably an infarct.

We never encountered hiccups in 150 other stereotactic procedures for Parkinson’s disease, such as thalamotomies or deep brain stimulation electrode implantation in the thalamus and therefore it is unlikely that medication or positive contrast medium ventriculography with Iohexol evoked the hiccups.

A possible cause for the transient hiccups could be the lesion in the ventral medial segment of the globus pallidus or pressure, due to oedema, on an adjacent structure like the internal capsule or putamen. We could not find other reports of hiccups as an adverse event after functional stereotactic surgical interventions, nor after lesions of other aetiology involving the striatum. Based on our experience we hypothesise that the globus pallidus or a neighbouring structure may be involved in triggering hiccups.

B. M. A. DE BEE
J. D. SPEELMAN
Department of Neurology

P. R. SCHUURMAN
D. A. BOSCH
Department of Neurosurgery, Academic Medical Center, University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Correspondence to: Dr R. M. A. de Bee, Department of Neurology, Academic Medical Center, PO Box 22700, 1100 DE Amsterdam, The Netherlands. Telephone 0031 20 566 3856; fax 0031 20 679 1438; email R.M.deBee@amc.uva.nl


Psychological adjustment and self reported coping in stroke survivors with and without emotionalism

Emotionalism after stroke is common, occurring in 10%–20% of a community sample. Psychological factors in its cause or maintenance have not been studied; research has tended to concentrate instead on location of the stroke lesion. We suspect that one reason for this neglect of psychological aspects of emotionalism is that most people do not make a distinction between emotionalism, and pathological crying and laughing. As a result all disorders of emotionalism after stroke are stereotyped as being related to brain damage and therefore psychologically meaningless.

None the less, many patients with emotionalism describe their crying as provoked by emotionally congruent experiences, which makes the tearfulness seem understandable. In two previous studies 5 we have shown that stroke patients with emotionalism have more symptoms of psychological disorder than do patients without emotionalism. In the present study, we explored further the psychological characteristics of stroke patients with emotionalism. Our aim was to determine whether they differed from patients without emotionalism in their psychological reactions to stroke, or in the coping strategies they reported.

Post-traumatic stress disorder is also characterised by recurrent episodes of intrusive and uncontrollable emotion, and we were therefore interested in whether patients with emotionalism also experienced intrusive thoughts typical of post-traumatic stress disorder. Because emotionalism is often described as uncontrollable, we were interested in the possibility that patients who were more generally helpless, passive, or avoidant in their responses to stroke. Again, because of the reported uncontrollability of emotionalism, we postulated that patients with emotionalism would report a more external locus of control than those without emotionalism.

Participants were adults admitted to local general hospitals after stroke, and were interviewed within 1 month of admission. Exclusions were due to poor physical health, cognitive impairment, communication difficulties, or lack of consent. Approval for the study was obtained from the local research ethics committees.

All participants completed a standardised measure of distress—the general health questionnaire, GHQ-12; a widely used measure of intrusive thoughts of the sort encountered in post-traumatic stress disorder—the Impact of events rating scale; a measure of cognitive coping—the mental adjustment to stroke scale (O’Rourke S, Dennis M, MacHale S, Slattery J. The development of the mental adjustment to stroke scale: reliability, patient outcome and associations with mood and social activity, manuscript in preparation); and a measure of beliefs about responsibility for recovery from illness—the recovery locus of control scale. All the measures are self report questionnaires.

A total of 177 stroke patients were screened, of whom 112 were excluded. The 65 participants (29 men, 36 women) had a mean age of 71.8 years (range 43 to 88 years). Nineteen participants met our criterion for emotionalism, a rate similar to that found in other studies. Their scores on the study measures are compared with the scores of patients without emotionalism in the table. It might be that these associations with emotionalism were accounted for by the greater general levels of distress experienced by those with emotionalism. We therefore undertook analysis of covariance with GHQ-12 and presence of emotionalism as the covariates, and each of the other test items in turn as the independent variable. The results showed an association, after adjustment for GHQ-12 score, between emotionalism and the impact of events subscales intrusion.
Comparison of stroke survivors with and without emotionalism, assessed in hospital 1 month after stroke

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No emotionalism (n=45)</th>
<th>Emotionalism (n=19)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GHQ-12*</td>
<td>3.2 (2.4)</td>
<td>5.3 (5.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recovery locus of control scale</td>
<td>33.2 (2.3)</td>
<td>34.1 (4.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact of events scale intrusion subscale**</td>
<td>2.9 (4.6)</td>
<td>9.2 (6.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact of events scale avoidance subscale*</td>
<td>4.7 (4.6)</td>
<td>9.9 (6.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MASS Fighting spirit subscale</td>
<td>49.1 (4.8)</td>
<td>48.6 (5.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MASS Anxious preoccupation subscale**</td>
<td>22.2 (2.8)</td>
<td>25.2 (4.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MASS Avoidance subscale</td>
<td>20.0 (1.9)</td>
<td>21.3 (2.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MASS Helplessness/hopelessness subscale**</td>
<td>1.7 (0.8)</td>
<td>1.9 (0.8)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| MASS = Mental adjustment to stroke scale.  \*p<0.05;  **p<0.01,

We thank those patients who participated in the study and the staff of local hospitals and the Leeds Stroke Database for their invaluable help. We also thank Dr Louise Dye for her statistical advice. This study was completed as part of work for the degree of DClinPsych at Leeds University (SE).

STEVEN ECCLES
ALLAN HOUSE
Division of Psychiatry and Behavioural Sciences in Relation to Medicine, University of Leeds, Leeds, UK

PETER KNAPP
Stroke Outcome Study, Research School of Medicine, Leeds, UK

Correspondence to: Dr Allan House, Division of Psychiatry and Behavioural Sciences in Relation to Medicine, University of Leeds, 15 Hyde Terrace, Leeds LS2 9LT, UK.


Paraneoplastic stiff limb syndrome

Stiff man syndrome (SMS) is a rare, severe progressive motor disorder characterised by painful spasms, symmetric axial muscle rigidity, and uncontrollable contractions leading to distorted posturing. The disorder has been associated with the autoantigens, glutamic acid decarboxylase (GAD), and amphiphysin, which are cytoplasmic proteins in neurons of the CNS. A large series of patients with SMS found that most have autoantibodies against GAD,6 whereas amphiphysin is presumably the predominant autoantigen in paraneoplastic SMS.7 Recently, Bo et al presented four patients with a stiff leg syndrome marked by progressive rigidity and spasms of the lower extremities. This group of patients tested negative for anti-GAD antibody by immunoprecipitation and demonstrated distinct electrophysiologically features. By contrast, another report described two patients with stiff leg syndrome who tested positive for anti-GAD antibody.8 Finally, in presenting a group of 13 patients, Barker et al proposed that the nomenclature

* "stiff limb syndrome" refers to the focal form of SMS when one or more distal limbs are involved; two of their patients were also anti-GAD antibody positive, but none were tested for antibodies to amphiphysin or identified as having an underlying neoplasm. We present a patient who clinically conforms to the stiff limb syndrome who was found to have autoantibody to GAD and breast cancer.

A 68 year old woman presented with a 1 month history of painful spasms in her legs. Cramps were associated with tactile stimuli and emotional upset. Within weeks, inversion began at the left and then right ankle, making ambulation difficult. Her medical history was significant for Graves’ disease treated with thymectomy and radioactive therapy, and hyperlipidaemia. She was a chronic smoker. General examination was noteworthy for lymphadenopathy in the right axilla. Her mental status was worse during periods of lower extremity spasms, during which she became anxious, diaphoretic, and tachycardic. Cranial nerve and motor evaluations were unremarkable, but assessment of the left leg, due to painful spasms elicited by light touch, was difficult. Inversion and plantar flexion were essentially fixed at the left ankle but could be overcome on the right. Deep tendon reflexes were 3+ in the upper and lower extremities, with sustained clonus at the right ankle. Sensory examination and spindles showed the exception of hypesthesia in the distal lower extremities, and coordination testing were grossly normal. No hyperlordosis or myoclonus was noted. Gait was limited due to ankle posturing.

The laboratory evaluation was noteworthy for a CSF with increased IgG indices (2.5, 3.4, normal, 0.2–0.8) and oligoclonal bands (5, 5) but no pleocytosis. Serological testing for anti-Hu, anti-Yo, and anti-Ri antibodies was unremarkable, and the haemoglobin A1C was 6.6 (5.6–7.7)%. Skin biopsy at three sites on the patient’s leg showed diminished epidermal nerve fibre density and terminal axonal swelling distally, consistent with a small fibre sensory neuropathy.9 The patient would not tolerate EMG. Magnetic resonance images of the brain and the entire spinal cord were normal. Fine needle aspiration of the left axillary soft tissue mass revealed a poorly differentiated, poorly differentiated metastatic adenocarcinoma. On an open surgical procedure, infiltrating duct carcinoma of the breast was identified. Anti-GAD antibodies were negative by western, chemical assay and immunoprecipitation, but antibodies to amphiphysin were not detected by immunocytochemistry, immunoprecipitation, or western blotting (Dr P De Camilli, Yale University).

Ongoing therapy with clonazepam and a trial of oral dexamethasone did not improve the lower extremity symptoms. The patient’s ankle posturing continued a slow progression to marked inversion, with significant contraction of hallucis longus. The patient died 18 months after symptom onset. Gross necropsy attributed the cause of death to aspiration pneumonia. Neuropathological examination showed a grossly normal spinal cord. Microscopically, the lumbar cord had mild reactive gliosis in the anterior horns but no evidence of inflammation. Sections of the frontal cortex, pons, and medulla showed mild diffuse reactive astrocytosis.

Stiff man syndrome is increasingly recognised as a heterogeneous disorder.10 Other case reports have documented patients with “focal” disease involving either lower or upper extremity posturing,11 which contrast...
with the "diffuse" axial and subsequent proximal muscle distribution of the classic disorder. Our patient differs from those reported with stiff leg syndrome in that an occult malignancy was present. Unfortunately, we were unable to obtain electrophysiological studies for comparison. The search for a paraneoplastic process was based on the findings of axillary lymphadenopathy and an abnormal CSF. Our patient is only the second reported patient with paraneoplastic SMS associated with anti-GAD antibody; the other had upper limb rigidity in the setting of breast cancer associated with anti-GAD antibody: the other reported patient with paraneoplastic SMS.

Paraneoplastic processes can affect any component of the nervous system and, occasionally, multiple levels, as in the syndrome of sensory neuronopathy-encephalomyelitis. Our patient's findings were not entirely consistent with criteria for classic SMS in that an apparent encephalopathy and a small fibre neuropathy were identified—for example, her dysautonomia (tachycardia and relative hypertension) during spasms may have been a manifestation of involvement of small fibres. The role of autoantibodies in the pathogenesis of SMS and cancer is unclear. Via its probable function in endocytosis, amphiphysin has been postulated to play a part in the regulation of growth factor internalisation; however, the absence of an autoimmune response to this autoantigen in our patient suggests that other mechanisms of oncogenesis in SMS exist. Given anecdotal evidence of improvement in paraneoplastic SMS after treating the underlying malignancy, we suggest that all patients with SMS, diffuse or focal, be screened for occult cancer.

ISAAC E SILVERMAN
Department of Neurology, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, USA

Correspondence to: Dr I E Silverman, Johns Hopkins Hospital, Pathology 509, 600 North Wolfe Street, Baltimore, MD 21287, USA. Telephone 001 410 955 6626; fax 001 410 614 1008; email isilver@jhmi.edu


Tetrodotoxin intoxication in a uraemic patient

Tetrodotoxin intoxication results from ingesting puffer fish or other animals containing the toxin. Clinical presentation is mainly acute motor weakness and respiratory paralysis. Death is common in the worst affected victims. Although the severity of the symptoms generally depends on the amount of toxin ingested, it may be influenced by the victim's medical condition, as described in this report. The patient was a 52 year old uraemic woman. The uraemia was of undefined aetiology. Over the past 3 years she has received regular haemodialysis. One day both she and her husband, a healthy 55 year old man, ate a fish soup. About 4 hours after the meal she developed a headache and a lingual and circumoral tingling sensation and numbness at the distal parts of all four limbs. She was dizzy and unsteady, had difficulty in swallowing, and became very weak. She was taken to the emergency service and was placed on machine assisted ventilation as respiratory distress and cyanosis developed. Her husband remained asymptomatic throughout the illness.

The patient's condition kept on deteriorating, developing eventually into a comatous-like state with no spontaneous or reflexive eye opening or limb movement within 30 minutes of intubation. On neurological examination, the pupillary light reflex was absent and oculocephalic manoeuvre elicited no ocular movements. All four limbs were areflexic and Babinski's signs were absent. Brain CT and laboratory studies of arterial blood gas (under assisted ventilation), electrolytes, liver function, blood glucose, and CSF study were unremarkable. An examination of renal function indicated chronic renal insufficiency with mild azotaemia (urea nitrogen 70 mg/dl, creatinine 9.1 mg/dl). An EEG, recorded 18 hours after the onset of symptoms when the neurological condition was unchanged, showed posterior dominant alpha waves intermixing with trains of short duration, diffuse theta waves. When brief noxious stimuli were applied to the sternum, they were replaced transiently by beta activities. The findings suggested that the profound neurological dysfunction might be peripheral in origin. The patient was given a course of haemodialysis according to the set schedule for uraemia at 21 hours after onset of the symptoms. Her condition improved dramati-

---

Changes in the symptoms of poisoning in relation to each course of haemodialysis. Scales in the vertical axis represent the arbitrary measurements of severity of each symptom; the numbers indicating day(s) after onset; ↓ = haemodialysis.

---
cally within an hour. She could open her eyes and she communicated and answered questions correctly by blinking. Pupillary reflex recovered and voluntary eye movements were limited only at the extreme lateral gaze. Muscle power was grade 3 and 4 in the proximal and distal parts of the four limbs. Tendon reflexes were absent. She was taken off mechanical ventilation the next day. Her clinical condition continued to improve and her symptoms subsided in a stepwise pattern, in response to each course of haemodialysis (figure). When recalling, she could remember certain events such as the recording of the EEG, but was “too weak to move” at that time. She regained her initial strength by the time she was discharged on day 16.

When analysing the remains of the cooked fish (identified as *Yongeichthys nebulosus*), tetrodotoxin was demonstrated by thin layer chromatography, and cellulose acetate membrane electrophoresis. Toxicity was assayed by using Institute of Cancer Research strain adult male mice and the toxicity score was 25 mouse units (MU)/g in fish muscle (1 MU = 1 mg of the ICR strain mouse.

Tetrodotoxin acts its effect through binding with and blocking the voltage dependent sodium channel. The voltage clamp experiments showed that tetrodotoxin diminishes the sodium inward current responsible for the depolarisation of excitatory membrane. The gating properties of the sodium channel, such as the activation and inactivation mechanism, are not altered—that is, the sodium channel is not permanently damaged and its function recovers when the bound toxin is released. In uremia, ion conductance through the sodium channel is also impaired. Sodium permeability through excitatory membranes is reduced and small inward sodium current and reduced action potential amplitudes are noted in experimental uraemic neuropathy. By contrast with the effects of tetrodotoxin, uremia changes the basic property of the sodium channel by an increased inactivation and an impaired activation mechanism. The excitability of peripheral nerves will be more significantly depressed when these two conditions coexist. The synergistic effect of uremia and tetrodotoxin is obvious in this incident in which the patient and her husband ingested roughly an equal amount of toxin (about 200 μg, calculated from toxic score times the weight of ingested fish). The amount is about 10% of the estimated lethal dose in humans—2200 μg/60 kg body weight (body weights of the patient and her husband were 54.5 and 62 kg, respectively)—and caused no clinical evidence of poisoning in the healthy person. It was of interest that the CNS was relatively spared from the toxicity as the EEG showed a posterior dominant, prominently reactive alpha rhythm and the patient retained consciousness when the symptoms were at their most severe.

One of the most striking clinical features in our patient was the response to haemodialysis. Despite the small amount of toxin ingested, the dramatic improvement of her clinical condition was most likely attributed to the rapid elimination of absorbed toxin in the course of haemodialysis, rather than spontaneous recovery. The physical and chemical properties of tetrodotoxin are also supportive to this hypothesis. It has a low molecular weight (C_{52}H_{128}O_{40}), is water soluble, and not significantly bound to protein—and all these features are often found in toxins amenable to haemodialysis. Traditionally, the management of tetrodotoxin intoxication is mainly supportive, such as gastric lavage to remove unabsorbed toxin and machine assisted ventilation when respiration is severely affected. We suggest that haemodialysis may be an effective method in the treatment of tetrodotoxin intoxication.

MIN-YU LAN
SHUNG-LON LAI
SHUN-SHENG CHEN
Department of Neurology, Kaohsiung Medical College, Kaohsiung City, Taiwan

DENG-FUW HWANG
Department of Food Science, National Taiwan Ocean University, Keelung City, Taiwan

Correspondence to: Dr Shun-Sheng Chen, Department of Neurology, Kaohsiung Medical College Hospital, 100 Shih-Chung 1st Road, Kaohsiung City 807, Taiwan. Telephone 00886 7 323423; email sheng@mail.nsysu.edu.tw

---


### Relation between critical illness polyneuropathy and axonal Guillain-Barré syndrome

The clinical entity critical illness polyneuropathy occurs almost exclusively in patients in critical care units and has been characterised as a complication of sepsis and multiple organ failure. Critical illness polyneuropathy may be a common cause of the difficulty in weaning patients from the ventilator, particularly those who show intractable ventilator dependence. All the measures used to prevent or reverse the decreased motor nerve conduction in patients with Guillain-Barré syndrome and critical illness polyneuropathy showed the presence of primary axonal degeneration of the motor and sensory fibres, mainly distally, with no evidence of demyelination. Zochodne et al. (excluding Bolton) therefore concluded that the two types of polyneuropathies most probably are separate entities.

Guillain and colleagues enumerated the clinical and spinal fluid features of one form of acute flaccid paralysis without regard for the underlying pathology or physiology. Classically pathological studies of Guillain-Barré syndrome, however, have identified prominent demyelination and inflammatory infiltrates in the spinal roots and nerves. Guillain-Barré syndrome often has been considered to be synonymous with the pathological designation of acute inflammatory demyelinating polyradiculoneuropathy, an erroneous assumption that has generated considerable controversy. Critical illness polyneuropathy showed similar features except that in critical illness polyneuropathy the inflammatory infiltrates are more prominent in the proximal than the distal segments of nerves. The evidence included a rapid fall in compound muscle action potentials and sensory nerve action potentials, and no evidence of demyelination. Such patients often had severe paralysis and made a slow recovery, usually reflecting the need to regenerate axons rather than remyelinate. Pathological findings are consistent with axonal degeneration without demyelination. Feasby et al. termed this pattern axonal Guillain-Barré syndrome and suggested that there is a fundamental difference in the underlying pathophysiology, resulting in primary axonal damage rather than demyelination. Griffin et al. then confirmed the existence of the acute motor-sensory axonal neuropathy (AMSAN) pattern of Guillain-Barré syndrome described by Feasby et al.
of acute diarrhoea, commonly precedes the development of Guillain-Barré syndrome. There is a close association between axonal Guillain-Barré syndrome and antecedent C jejuni infection. The antecedent infectious symptom was diarrhoea in three of five patients with antecedent Guillain-Barré syndrome described by Feasby et al. Observations by Griffin et al confirmed that AMSAN follows C jejuni infection. Serum samples from patients with axonal Guillain-Barré syndrome subsequent to C jejuni enteritis often have high class autoantibodies to gangliosides GM1, GM1b, GD1a, or GalNAc-GD1a in the acute phase of the illness, and there is molecular mimicry between these gangliosides and the lipopolysaccharides of C jejuni isolates from patients with Guillain-Barré syndrome. This ganglioside mimicry may trigger high production of the IgG anti-ganglioside antibodies, and these autoantibodies may cause motor nerve dysfunction in patients with GBS.

Interestingly, Hagenese et al reported a case of "C jejuni bacteremia and subsequent Guillain-Barré syndrome" that occurred in a patient with chronic graft versus host disease and ankylosing spondylitis, who had undergone minimal transection of the lower spine. Because there was acute flaccid paralysis associated with sepsis, some physicians might have diagnosed critical illness polyneuropathy. Conversely, the existence of this case strongly suggests that some diagnosis of critical illness polyneuropathy should actually be axonal Guillain-Barré syndrome or AMSAN. Our hypothesis of the nosological relation between critical illness polyneuropathy and Guillain-Barré syndrome is shown in the figure. Serum IgG antibodies against GM1, GM1b, GD1a, or GalNAc-GD1a could be used as immunological markers for axonal Guillain-Barré syndrome. To examine the aetiology of critical illness polyneuropathy and its nosological relation to axonal Guillain-Barré syndrome, it is necessary to investigate whether patients with critical illness polyneuropathy have anti-ganglioside antibodies during the acute phase of the illness.

NOBUHIRO YUKI
KOICHI HIRATA
Department of Neurology, Dokkyo University School of Medicine, Japan
Correspondence to: Dr Nobuhiro Yuki, Department of Neurology, Dokkyo University School of Medicine, Kitakobayashi 880, Mibu, Shimotsuga, Tochigi 321-0293, Japan.


Repetitive transcranial magnetic stimulation in the treatment of chronic negative schizophrenia: a pilot study

Recently, a new technology known as repetitive transcranial magnetic stimulation (RTMS) has been developed. In 1994, the use of magnetic stimulation in clinical psychiatry was suggested. Since then, it has been used in the study or treatment of obsessive-compulsive disorder, conversion disorder, schizophrenia, and particularly, depression.

Our pilot study aimed to assess the possible adverse effects of this treatment in chronic schizophrenic patients with severe negative symptoms; to evaluate if direct RTMS of the prefrontal cortex might influence negative symptoms or cognitive impairments in patients with chronic schizophrenia; and, thirdly, to note if RTMS might modify the deficit in prefrontal cortical activity, often referred to as hypofrontality, that occurred in a patient with chronic schizophrenia. 

Six right-handed patients with chronic schizophrenia were identified at the outpatient psychiatric clinic of the Hospital Clinic of Barcelona. There were two men and four women (mean age 39).

Exclusion criteria included alcohol or substance abuse, previous psychiatric treatment, history of brain injury, systemic neurological illness, taking cerebral metabolic activator or vasodilator medications, electroconvulsive therapy within 6 months, and significant abnormalities in laboratory examinations. All patients were taking neuroleptic drugs, but a stable dose for at least 3 months was required. All patients were studied off benzodiazepines for at least 1 week before beginning the treatment. During the RTMS, psychotropic medications were continued at the initial dosage.

All patients were admitted to hospital. Inpatients underwent the UKU side effect scale, the positive and negative syndrome scale (PANSS), and a neuropsychological battery, the day before beginning the treatment and 24 hours after the last session. An equivalent neuropsychological battery was used on both occasions, which consisted of: the trail making tests A and B, the FAS verbal fluency test, and two subtests of the Wechsler memory scale (the visual memory reproduction and the verbal paired associates subtests).

A brain SPECT study was performed using a rotating dual head gamma camera, fitted with high resolution fanbeam collimators. Two 99mTc-HMPAO SPECT scans with TRM were used in the study or treatment of the Wechsler intelligence, and the trail making tests A and B, the FAS verbal fluency test, and two subtests of the Wechsler memory scale (the visual memory reproduction and the verbal paired associates subtests).

An important finding of this study was that RTMS was given in a Mag Pro magnetic stimulator, 5 days a week, during 2 weeks, at a dosage of 20 Hz for 2 seconds, once per minute for 20 minutes at 80% motor threshold. The motor threshold was determined by visualisation of finger movement. A butterfly magnetic coil was placed tangential to the orbital area, on the C3 and C4 EEG point. The motor threshold was increased by 5%.

An important finding of this study was that RTMS might be given to stable schizophrenic patients without exacerbating their psycho-

Table Neuropsychological tests and PANSS scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test</th>
<th>Mean (SD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Block design</td>
<td>Pre 49 (11.95) NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trail making test</td>
<td>A 38.4 (16.8) NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trail making test</td>
<td>B 38.3 (4.5) NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immediate visual</td>
<td>reproduction 41 (10.03) NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delayed visual</td>
<td>reproduction 50.5 (4.82) NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PANSS-AMSAN</td>
<td>54.8 (11.2) NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PANSS-AMSAN</td>
<td>46.8 (23.5) p&lt;0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PANSS-AMSAN</td>
<td>53.8 (18.0) NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PANSS-AMSAN</td>
<td>54 (7.46) NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PANSS-AMSAN</td>
<td>59.5 (10.03) NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PANSS-AMSAN</td>
<td>8.8 (1.17) NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PANSS-AMSAN</td>
<td>37.67 (11.15) NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PANSS-AMSAN</td>
<td>36.5 (11.47) NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PANSS-AMSAN</td>
<td>27.83 (8.47) NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PANSS-AMSAN</td>
<td>16.83 (7.28) NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PANSS-AMSAN</td>
<td>15.33 (7.55) NS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pre=preatreatment; Post=post-treatment; PANSS=positive and negative scale score; PG=general psychopathology scale; N=negative scale; P=positive scale.
Sensory alien hand syndrome

The case report by Ay et al. of alien hand syndrome and review of the literature neglected the intriguing issue of why in every case so far reported the patient seems to be terrified of the alien limb. Not believing that you are any more in control of a limb is not likely to be a pleasant experience.

Those with alien hand syndrome seem to jump to extremely negative conclusions concerning the intent of the limb. Typically, in the report of Ay et al. at least the common belief is that the limb has deeply malevolent intentions towards the victim.

It is this aspect of alien hand syndrome that I suggest also needs incorporating into its neurological explanations, and which provides a clue as to why our everyday experience of being in charge of our bodies, and so initiating all personal action, itself has a neurological basis. In other words, while the brain is the seat of conscious decision and experiences, there is also a part of our nervous system which is responsible for our belief that we have free will over our behaviour. Patients with alien hand syndrome think that they are no longer in control of a limb because the part of the brain that gives us the sensation of control over our bodies has been damaged. When that happens, our limbs seem to act independently of us.

Research conducted in the 1980s has found that the same electrical brain wave changes that characteristically precede all limb movements, occur several 100 ms before we seem to consciously decide to move a limb. If our conscious decision to act preceded by brain changes that anticipate action, then our “decision” to choose how to behave or “freedom”, as in free will, is in fact illusory. Our choices have in a sense been decided beforehand by our brains.

Spence’s assertions that evidence such as this, combined with phenomena such as alien hand syndrome, means that philosophers have to reconsider whether we have free will. He argues that these data suggest that our sense of agency is illusory and it follows that most of us share in common the useful delusion that we have free will. Patients with alien hand syndrome have lost this experience in relation to a particular limb. There is a sense then that those who experience the syndrome are closer to the reality of how much we are responsible for our actions than the rest of us.

This is because the loss of our sense of control over the part of the brain that normally functions to make us think that we have conscious freedom of will. They develop the experience, therefore, of becoming mere remote spectators to the actions of the alien hand.

Defenders of human “free will” argue what happens before the brain itself decides to act is still unknown, and there may be a role for our own autonomy there. But even these free will guardians concede the neurological research indicates that whatever happens before the brain is roused, must occur below our conscious awareness.

Yet in alien hand syndrome the patient thinks that the hand has hostile motivations; it is invariably the case that the patient not only thinks that the limb is “not self” but finds that the limb behaves towards the self in a destructive and aggressive manner. This could be explained by the assumption that when we lose our conscious sense of voluntary control over our bodies, our minds have to come up with an explanation for the location of action of our movements. We decide that if ourselves are not in control, then someone or something else must be; therefore, we no longer have a sense of the limb belonging to us.

Because to lose control over our bodies is one of the most terrifying experiences, our attempt to explain this finding occurs in the context of fear. It may be that our apprehension leads us to misinterpret innocent reflexive acts of our hands, such as scratching or rubbing, as malevolently inspired. Plus it could be that our interpretation of spurious possession in turn inspires the patient himself, only this is beyond our conscious awareness.

It may therefore be that we need to believe in our own free will and personal control over our actions, because if we do not, the experience of our bodies acting as if we merely came along for the ride, too frightening. Also, we may no longer believe that our bodies or its relevant parts belong to us. All neurologists who have reported alien hand syndrome remark on how psychologically disturbing the symptom is for the patient. Psychiatrists would be interested in the parallels between alien hand syndrome and the psychotherapy experience. So the fact that this case, plus the fact that the two diseases may share corpus callosum pathology, could give some way to explaining how schizophrenic symptoms are frightening to the patient. So we seem to lose ownership of our limbs because they obey us. When they seem to stop responding to our wills, we conclude that our limbs are no longer our own, and try to fend them off. Hence it would seem that one of the prices we have to pay for our awareness of ourselves to evolve as a function of the brain, is the delusion that we are responsible for all our actions. If we had conscious awareness of ourselves, but no sense of free will, our bodies would feel alien to us.

The philosophical importance of alien hand syndrome is that it shows emphatically via neurology that it is possible to drive a wedge between consciousness and the experience of free will. The brain had to develop the sensation of free will after developing consciousness, because being without the sensation of free will produces extremely negative emotional experiences. So the fact that every case, so far reported of alien hand syndrome impugns negative intent to the alien limb might not be an incidental finding, but a core aspect of the disorder.

R PERSAUD
The Maudsley Hospital, Croydon Mental Health Services, Westatts Rehabilitation Unit, 49 St James’s Road, West Croydon, Surrey CR9 2RR, UK. Telephone 0404 181 700 8512; fax 0404 181 700 8504; email rajendra@btinternet.com

Vasomotor reactivity is exhausted in transient ischaemic attacks with limb shaking

The article of Baumgartner and Baumgartner entitled “Vasomotor reactivity is exhausted in transient ischaemic attacks with limb shaking” provides interesting new information regarding the role that involuntary limb movements contribute to haemodynamic failure from severe carotid artery occlusive disease. The authors evoke an “exhausted cerebral vasoreactivity in the hemispheres opposite the involuntarily limb movements”. In their report, involuntary movements affected only the limbs, and displayed no tonic contraction, tonic-clonic jerking, or Jacksonian march and no epileptic activity during attacks. These findings led the authors to strongly argue against seizures as the cause of limb shaking in these transient ischaemic events.

In contradistinction, a 72 year old right handed man was admitted to our hospital with a 3 month history of episodic weakness and numbness of the right arm. The patient then had six discrete stereotypic episodes of right arm weakness and clumsiness that were also associated with right sided aphasia in speaking. Several episodes of dysphasia, numbness and weakness of the right arm and leg (MRC grade 4/5) were seen, unrelated to posture, of some of which occurred when the patient was supine. Most episodes were characterised by slight tremulousness and asterixis-like movements of the outstretched right arm. There was a return to baseline functioning between events. Video/EEG monitoring, however, showed low voltage spikes in the left central-parietal head regions contralateral to the facial twitching and the right arm and right leg weakness. Although ongoing clinical and EEG seizure activity stopped after 2 mg intravenous lorazepam, they reoccurred after loading with phenytoin. Because angiography disclosed a greater than 95% stenosis of the left internal carotid artery (while the patient was treated with phenytoin at a concentration of 16.5 mg/l), the patient was anticoagulated against seizures as the cause of limb shaking, and ceasing of the TIAs after the administration of an anticoagulant drug.

Limb shaking TIAs, however, differed from other TIAs related to inhibitory seizures in several ways. (1) They are associated with positive phenomena (limb shaking), and the involuntary movements do not affect the facial muscles. (2) Patients with attacks of shaking movements of the limbs have no EEG evidence of epileptic activity, and involuntary movements do not stop after administration of anticonvulsant therapy. (3) Although the patient presented by Kaplan had a 95% stenosis of the left internal carotid artery, it is unclear whether haemodynamic failure was present or not, because no studies evaluating the haemodynamic reserve of the homolateral hemisphere were presented. This is in accordance with the finding that the involuntary movements as well as the sensorimotor deficits of Kaplans’ patient were not related to haemorrhage. The pathogenesis of such attacks may be due to disinhibition of subcortical control mechanisms as a result of ischaemia.

In our opinion, it is not clear whether the asterixis-like movements of the outstretched right arm of Kaplan’s patient are due to epileptic seizures, because unilateral asterixis of the outstretched arm has been reported with contralateral vascular lesions affecting almost all cerebral structures involved in the homolateral hemisphere including ischaemia in the territory of the middle cerebral artery.

RALF W BAUMGARTNER
Department of Neurology, University Hospital of Zurich, Switzerland

IRIS BAUMGARTNER
Division of Angiology, University Hospital of Bern, Switzerland

Address correspondence to: Dr Ralf W Baumgartner, Neurologische Klinik, Frauenklinikstrasse 26, CH-8091 Zurich, Switzerland. Telephone: +41 1 440 43 30; fax 0041 1 255 43 80; e-mail Strub@neurol.unizh.ch

BOOK REVIEWS


To the MRCP candidate neurology is one of the more daunting specialties. The unfamiliar nerve conduction study and the frankly mysterious EEG can distress an otherwise well rounded medical house officer. Despite the fact that much of neurology is commonly seen on a general medical ward—strokes, dementias and so forth—the general perception is of an unimaginable list of eponymous syndromes and obscure signs. Rather than dwell on the last, in this book Dr Smith tries to address the commoner complaints as examination style questions each with a “simple clinical lesion”. The “grey case” section, for instance, includes questions on multiple sclerosis, cluster headache, and HSV encephalitis, while broadening the topics to include postinfective demyelination, chronic hemiparesis, and acute haemorrhagic encephalomyelitis. There is, however, a tendency for the discussion after each question to be rather brief. A fuller explanation, with more allowance for the reader’s ignorance, would have been appreciated. The data interpretation section is somewhat better, covering CSF, EEG, and other data extremely well. Perhaps a little too well; would an MRCP candidate really be expected to recognise the characteristic EEG of Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease? I surely hope not. Finally, the slide tests are disappointing. If anything, neurology lends itself best to this section of the written examination but it is let down by the poor quality of some of the images in this book. This is especially unfortunate, as other images in the same section are remarkably impressive. The Sturge-Weber skull radiograph and central pontine myelinolysis MRI are beautiful. In summary, this is a creditable first edition. I look forward to the second.

STEFAN MARGNIAN


This book, after a short introduction to some of the fundamental features of the disease goes on to provide some 117 illustrations of aspects of the disease from Cruveihier’s plates to histopathological specimens and also a heavy leaning to imaging particularly magnetic resonance scanning, as might be expected. There is no doubting the aesthetic impact of this short book. In addition, the fact that these illustrations emanate from a well established figure in the multiple sclerosis world and are likely to be a representative set of personal teaching slides from a successful academic career all vouch for the provenance and informative nature of the atlas. However the place of such a book within a neurologist’s library has to be questioned. There are a plethora of high quality textbooks devoted to all aspects of multiple sclerosis all well illustrated and most in colour. They provide in depth analysis of all aspects of the disease and although their illustrations tend to be smaller this is where I would choose to put my money. It may be that the circulation of this book will be higher than expected as it is likely to be a popular choice for some pharmaceutical companies.

NEIL ROBERTSON


This monograph is the latest to be produced by the American Association of Neurological Surgeons as part of its Neurosurgical Topics series. It begins by tracing the history of calvarial reconstruction from ancient times. There follows a discussion of the different autologous donor sites and synthetic materials currently available for repair of calvarial and facial defects. The merits, disadvantages, and contraindications of each are considered. Dural substitutes are then dealt with in similar fashion. Specific problems, such as scalp reconstruction and the management of comminuted frontal sinus fractures, and reconstruction of the anterior skull base are the subject of separate chapters. The final part of the book is devoted to craniosynostosis. A review of current knowledge on pathogenesis is followed by a good account of some of the more common techniques used to treat single suture synostosis. Understandably, in a book of this type there is space only for an overview of the treatment and complications of multifaceted involvement, but the chapter provides well chosen references for further reading.

The reconstruction of traumatic and postoperative calvarial defects constitutes the bulk of this volume, and is dealt with very effectively. Operative techniques and the relative merits of various materials are covered in a clear and concise manner. By contrast, the section on aural substitutes is a little disappointing because it does not provide the reader with reasoned argument on how to select the most appropriate graft from the sometimes bewildering variety of autologous, synthetic, and xenograft materials which are available when vascularised pericranial tissue is not an option. Craniosynostosis is a topic which is covered very well in standard paediatric neurosurgical texts and it is not worth buying this book for that section alone. However, the account of techniques for repair of calvarial defects is excellent and merits the inclusion of this text in a departmental library.

ROBERT MACFARLANE


Transcranial colour duplex sonography is an ultrasonic technique which is becoming increasingly available for the non-invasive imaging of intracranial structures, particularly the basal cerebral arteries. There are now four principal components to the technique: B mode ultrasound which can be used to image the brain parenchyma; colour coded Doppler which provides a colour image of the basal vessels; spectral analysis of pulsed wave Doppler which is used to derive blood flow velocities; and latterly “power” Doppler which is used to derive insonation following analysis of the amplitude rather than the frequency of the reflected ultrasound beam. In addition, echocontrast agents are now available which can increase the signal to noise ratio and thus help standardise the depiction of the detrimental acoustic effects of the skull.

This volume of 400 pages and liberal colour diagrams and prints is edited by three exponents of the technique. Thirty one chapters contain a plethora of topics from the history of transcranial ultrasound, through the physics of Doppler ultrasound to potential clinical applications. The book is helpfully split into two sections with the theoretical aspects described in the first half and clinical aspects in the second.

This is certainly a specialised book and will only really appeal to those interested in, or wishing to develop, expertise in transcranial color coded ultrasound. I read through the technical chapters on instrumentation, signal processing, echocontrast agents, harmonic imaging etc. which will certainly provide a complete understanding of the principles behind the technique. I think that some of the errors made in the interpretation of vascular ultrasound examinations are due to an incomplete understanding of the physics of Doppler ultrasound, hence the attention paid to this area is commendable.

The clinical section covers the examination technique, normal reference values, the main categories of cerebrovascular disease, and also contains chapters on areas which may be less immediately suitable for ultrasound study. For example, the findings in head trauma, tumours, psychiatric disorders, and movement disorders are the subject of separate chapters. Although I have no problem with enthusiasm for this technique a little pragmatism would not go amiss. A more balanced discussion of the limitations as well as potential applications of the technique could have been applied.

As with any book with multiple authors there is some variation in style and overlap, particularly in the introductions and conclusions of the chapters. Nevertheless, it is a comprehensive current review of transcranial colour coded sonography. Although the reader must decide exactly how this technique fits into clinical practice the book will certainly stimulate some ideas.

PETER MARTIN


This is volume 47 of a series entitled Neurological Disease and Therapy, series editor W C Koller. This volume is edited by two American surgeons and two British neurophysiologists. Most of the 45 contributors are American or British, almost half of whom, including Dr Cole, are from Southampton. The book begins with a pathophysiological
Introduction setting the scene for the five main disease sections covering developmental/genetic disease, spinal injury, infection, tumour, and the effect of neurological and systemic disease on the spinal cord. This chapter covers a wide area from multiple sclerosis to motor neuron disease to vascular disease to metabolic diseases. Then follows a section on investigation considering imaging, neurophysiology, and urodynamics. Finally, there is a miscellaneous section covering clinically important entities such as pain, sexual problems, and terminal care associated with spinal cord disease but also including a highly specialised chapter on the role of oncological therapy in spinal cord injury.

This is an ambitious attempt at being comprehensive. The editors themselves worry that the emphasis favours surgical conditions. Although this might be the case, many surgeons to the neuro-rheumatologist, care for spinal disease often falling between several specialties. Therefore, it is of benefit to the clinician to have all aspects of spinal disease in one volume. The standard and style of the individual chapters varies, that on motor neuron disease being up to date and topical, malignancies being covered in depth. That on sexual problems associated with spinal cord disease is excellent, particularly practical and a must for both doctors dealing with spinal disease and for patients themselves who are often uninform (our fault, not theirs). The chapter on depression will be food for thought for many doctors who enjoy recreational diving, for although studies have not yet shown adverse affects on the quality of life in those who dive frequently but without injury, the evidence for cumulative neurological damage from neurophysiological, imaging, and pathological studies is compelling.

The quality of illustration is high. Perhaps not surprisingly, this is particularly evident in the imaging section (where there is a rather spectacular sagittal T2 weighted MRI of a intramedullary arteriovenous malformation). In addition to imaging many of the chapters also make good use of schematic diagrams and line drawings to enhance the text.

Drs Engler, Cole, and Merton end their preface by commenting that “Our main hope, however, is that the chapters will read as a series of views on the spinal cord and its disease, so that a surgeon may learn about current practice as well as the wide range of conditions affecting the cord that are outside the field of surgery”. While I agree that educating surgeons is an admirable aim, I think that the authors rather undersell themselves and that this book’s main strength, as I have said above, is that it will appeal to all disciplines that deal with spinal cord disease, bringing together neurological, rheumatological, and surgical disease that is often covered in separate textbooks.

GILLIAN HALL


This is the second time that I have been asked to review a book on this topic. The first time I approached the task with some scepticism—were neurological diseases in women really so different from those in men that they warranted their own text book? But I rapidly became a convert to the cause, being reminded that there are issues specific to females that influence both disease, investigation, and treatment (pregnancy, breast feeding, menopause, to name the most obvious) and that not all neurological diseases attack the sexes equally. There are also wider socioeconomic and legal issues that play a part in the complete disease picture which many of us neglect too often but which this book is careful to address (see below). Leaving content aside for a moment, this is a beautifully presented book; clearly headed and with wide use of well constructed tables. It encourages one to read on. It seems up to date and well referenced.

The contributors (40 in total) are exclusively American, and east coast American at that with only occasional forays westward. The text is divided into three sections. The first, entitled General Is It in Women includes an anatomical chapter considering the sex differences of regional brain structure and function. More novel for this type of text, it contains two thoughtful chapters considering women’s health within the context of their lifestyles and women’s health and its relation with the law. This chapter considers issues such as coercive approaches to preventing foetal harm, those relating to informed consent to medical treatment, and difficult choices with neurological implications. The law and the case examples are exclusively American but the issues are universal. This opening section leaves no doubt that this is a book that has taken female issues extremely seriously.

The second section looks at neurological diseases as they affect females at different life stages, from birth through menarche, pregnancy, and menopause, to the elderly woman. As well as considering genetic diseases that strike at a particular age, these chapters consider the influence of changing physiology and hormonal balance on neurological disease. The third section is the most conventional. Each chapter considers a neurological disease representing these diseases with emphasis on their effect on women and there is, by necessity, some overlap between this and the previous section. As a non-American, I would feel more comfortable to believe that the high number of female patients with peripheral nerve injuries secondary to physical beatings, knife wounds, or gunshot wounds reflected the country of origin of this book!

If pushed to criticise, the indexing could be more complete and certain conditions considered in more detail, in particular, paraneoplastic conditions associated with breast and gynaecological malignancies. However, that aside, I think this a rather special book and not only a good addition to any neurological library but a useful purchase for anyone interested in female medical issues.

GILLIAN HALL

The reader may be interested in the following:


CORRECTION


During the editorial process the descriptions of the histograms in figure 4 (p 614) were wrongly ascribed. The corrected figure is reproduced below.

Figure 4 Correlation of clinical response (grade 0 or 1 response indicates non-responders, grade 2 response indicates reduced response, and grade 3 or 4 are responders) with response to test injections.

---

**CORRECTION**


During the editorial process the descriptions of the histograms in figure 4 (p 614) were wrongly ascribed. The corrected figure is reproduced below.