LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Postictal psychosis related regional cerebral hyperperfusion

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

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 Antiepileptic drugs were withdrawn to facilitate seizure recording.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

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

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

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

Both patients showed postictal psychosis and had a regional increase in rCBF over the right temporal neocortex and the left basal ganglia compared with their interictal study (figure). Quantitative analysis for patient 1 showed changes of ASI during IP and PP over right MT was +75% (6.6476 to -1.65289); over the right LT was +116.7% (1.07727 to 12.55764); and over the left BG was +206.8% (2.07373 to 2.21574). Quantitative analysis for patient 2 showed changes of ASI during IP and PP over right MT was −3.8% (13.14217 to 12.64516); over right LT was +178.6% (10.4696 to 18.7007); and over left BG was +155.9% (5.85556 to 3.27522).

Postictal psychosis is a distinct clinical event associated with temporal lobe epilepsy. The diagnosis of postictal psychosis requires a close temporal relation between bouts of complex partial seizures and the onset of psychosis. The psychosis usually develops after a cluster of partial seizures. Partial seizures were preceded by abrupt withdrawal of antiepileptic drugs. The cluster occurs in patients with poor drug compliance or during video EEG telemetry studies when antiepileptic drug administration was stopped purposefully. The clinical course of postictal psychosis is usually benign and predictable. In our patients, the duration of psychotic disturbances lasted from 2 to 4 days, which is in keeping with the good prognosis. Antipsychotic drugs, such as haloperidol and fluphenazine are usually prescribed. The underlying mechanism of postictal psychosis is unknown. Postictal cerebral hyperfusion has been postulated as an analogue to Todd’s paralysis after seizure. However, the presence of increased rCBF during postictal psychosis, may suggest an ongoing angiogenesis.

In our laboratory, we disclosed that peculiar isoforms of fibronectin (FN) and tenascin (TN) typically occur in the extracellular matrix. Their expression is dependent on enlargement of the venous compartment, organisation in the setting of microhaemorrhages, and gliosis. However, recent findings are consistent with the hypothesis of ongoing angiogenesis.

Previous research from our laboratory disclosed that peculiar isoforms of fibronectin (FN) and tenasin (TN) typically occur in fetal and neoplastic tissues. These isoforms are a blend of structurally different glycoproteins that result from alternative splicing of the primary transcript and are mainly expressed in the extracellular matrix. Their expression is undetectable in normal adult tissues, with the exception of the vessels in the regenerating endometrium. To gain further insight into the pathobiology of the AVMs, we report a case of anaplastic gliomas. The present report sought to ascertain whether these lesions also express oncotic FN and TN isoforms.

Tissue samples were obtained after neurosurgical excisions of ruptured AVMs. All 10 patients had experienced an intracerebral haemorrhage as the first clinical manifestation of their disease. There was no drug history before bleeding. Control specimens from two right gyri recti and one cerebellar tonsil were obtained, respectively, from operations for ruptured aneurysms of the anterior communicating artery or for Arnold Chiari disease.

Immunohistochemical evaluations were performed on 5 μm thick cryostat sections using a protocol reported previously. Owing to the limited amount of available material, only in a few cases was some fresh tissue retained to allow western blots. Distribution of FN and TN isoforms was investigated using three monoclonal antibodies (mAbs) or two Ab fragments, obtained by phage display technology, respectively. These Abs, prepared in our laboratory, were found to work on fresh frozen material. According to the previous characterisations the BC-1 mAb and the TN-11 Ab fragments are specific for isoforms occurring almost exclusively in fetal tissues and in tumours, with the recognised TN isoform being typically associated with anaplastic gliomas (table).

For the mAb BC-1 we used the recombinant protein containing the type-III repeats 7B–8–9. For the mAb IST-4 we used the recombinant protein containing the type-III repeats 2–8. For the recombinant antibodies TN-11 and TN-12 the recombinant type-III repeat C and the recombinant fragment containing the BG-III repeat were used respectively.

All 10 AVMs were found to contain large amounts of FN and TN, as shown by intense immunostaining with the use of the IST-9 / IST-4 mAbs and the TN-12 Ab fragment. The staining was localised either in the endothelium or the subendothelial layer. A positive response was found in several artery-like vessels and in a few vessels with thinner walls using the mAb BC-1. Staining with the TN-11 Ab fragment showed occurrence of type III repeat C TN isoform in the inner layers of the vascular components of the nidus, irrespective of their morphology.

Six of the 10 examined specimens were found to contain portions of cerebral tissue surrounding the angiomatous nidi. In all these cases the wall of several vessels exhibited intense staining with the use of the TN-11 Ab fragment. Using the BC-1 mAb some of these vessels exhibited some staining (figure). In the control specimens (brain and cerebellum) both the FN isoforms containing the ED-B sequence (ED-B-FN) and the type III repeat C TN isoform were absent, despite the widespread distribution of total FN and TN in the vascular walls.

Characterisation of the employed Abs and distribution of the recognized isoforms.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anti-FN mAbs1</th>
<th>Anti-TN Ab fragments4</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>IST-4</strong></td>
<td><strong>IST-9</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognised isoforms</td>
<td>Total FN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distribution of the isoform (%)</td>
<td>Widespread</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isoforms containing the ED-A sequence</td>
<td>Present in the vascular wall and the matrix of fetal tissues and tumours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isoform containing the ED-B sequence</td>
<td>Present in the vascular wall and the matrix of fetal tissues and tumours</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

References:
6. Parietal
Previous findings showed that ED-B+FN presents with conformational modifications in its central part and results from derepression of FN pre-mRNA. The distribution of this isoform was found to be highly restricted in normal adult tissues. By contrast, ED-B+FN exhibited widespread distribution in the vasculature of fetal tissues, including brain, and of several types of malignancies. It was therefore regarded as a marker of angiogenesis. Similarly, the type III repeat C TN isoform, recognised by the Ab fragment TN-11, was found to occur in the vascular walls of anaplastic gliomas. Northern blot analysis showed that the mRNA of this isoform was undetectable in normal tissues and some malignancies, but was present in large amounts in fetal tissues, including brain, and in glioblastomas.

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

Furthermore, use of the cell proliferation marker MB-1 showed endothelial proliferation in arterioles, venules, and capillaries of the cerebral tissue neighboring AVMs. The present findings indicate that a particular FN isoform, mainly expressed by the vasculature of fetal and tumorous tissues, as well as a TN isoform typically detected in the walls of vessels in anaplastic gliomas, also occur in AVMs and in vessels of adjacent cerebral tissue, but that both isoforms are absent in normal brain. This evidence provides further support to the hypothesis of ongoing angiogenesis in and around these lesions.

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

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

Hashimoto's encephalopathy presenting as "myxoedematous madness"

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

Although none of the published cases of Hashimoto's encephalopathy has described psychosis as a primary feature, it is possible that "myxoedematous madness", a condition first described in detail by Asher in 1949, lies in a range of encephalopathic phenomena mediated by autoimmune thyroid disease. The suggestion would certainly be consistent with the range of clinical presentations of other autoimmune cerebral vasculitides. As autoimmune thyroiditis is the commonest cause of hypothyroid failure in this country, 11 further cases have been present in at least some of Asher's original 14 cases. Although most had florid myxoedematous features at psychiatric presentation, this may simply reflect the difficulty in diagnosing subclinical thyroid disease before rapid laboratory assays became widely available. Many features of the present case, however, favoured an endocrine rather than an inflammatory mechanism, suggesting that the condition of "myxoedematous madness", though rare, remains a valid diagnostic entity.

A 63 year old market stallholder without medical or psychiatric history was brought to a local psychiatric hospital by the police. His business had been in decline for several months, and his family had noticed uncharacteristic emotional liability. In the weeks preceding admission he had experienced delusions and hallucinations, and exhibited uncharacteristic behaviour. He had reported a vision of the crucifixion, and hearing the voice of his dead mother. He claimed that his business was occupied by the devil, drove around aimlessly in his car, and appeared constantly fearful and withdrawn. On the day of admission he had made a bonfire in the garden and burned his wife's clothes, family photographs, furniture, and business papers. When his wife and son tried to intervene he...
became aggressive and threatened them with a saw. The general practitioner was called and suspected an acute psychosis and brought a new psychotherapist and a severe depressive illness. Police assistance was requested because of the patient’s continuing violent behaviour. On admission he was unkempt but cooperative and his initial impression was of a new psychotic illness. He denied depression, but displayed no insight into the irregularity of his behaviour. No psychotic features were seen, although during the admission he consistently rationalised all reported psychotic phenomena. He was aggressive towards staff and made repeated attempts to abscond. General physical examination was unremarkable. Neurological examination was normal except for spoken language, which was fluent and grammatical, but contained word finding pauses, circumlocutions, and occasional semantic errors (for example, “I just want to get my feet back on the table”). Formal neuropsychological testing, and a screen of laboratory tests for reversible causes of encephalopathy, were performed on admission, and results are presented below (column A). Attention is drawn to his mild naming deficit, and poor performance on the Rey figure, which was due to planning rather than visuospatial errors, suggesting a predominantly “dysexecutive” pattern. CT and EEG were both normal and the SPECT abnormal. Reduced perfusion, which normalised with treatment. The evidence for a significant vasculitis: recognition, diagnosis and management. J Neurol Neurosurg Psychiatry 1997; 60:107.3 4 Forherr CM, Katarmakis G, Garron DC. Autoimmune thyroiditis and a rapidly progressive dementia: global hypoperfusion on SPECT scanning suggests autoimmune thyroiditis. Neurol Neurosurg Psychiatry 1997; 94:623–6. 5 Scolding NJ, Jette DR, Zaizov R, et al. Cerebral vasculitis: recognition, diagnosis and management. Q J Med 1997; 90:61–73. 6 Duan CM, Danieli GI. Cerebral autoimmune thyroiditis. N Engl J Med 1996; 338:99–107.

**Table 1** Laboratory and neuropsychological results at presentation (A) and at 12 month follow up (B)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Laboratory (units)</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
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<tr>
<td>Full blood count</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Erythrocyte sedimentation rate</td>
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<td>Normal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urea and electrolytes</td>
<td>Normal</td>
<td>Normal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liver function tests</td>
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<td>Normal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antinuclear antibody</td>
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<td>Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B12 and folate</td>
<td>Normal</td>
<td>Not tested</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VDLR</td>
<td>Normal</td>
<td>Not tested</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thyroid stimulating hormone (mIU/L)</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>0.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free T4 (pmol/L)</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>Not tested</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antithyroid microsomal antibody titer</td>
<td>25/30</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psymetric (normal/predicted range):</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Folstein MMSE (&gt;24)</td>
<td>10th percentile</td>
<td>18th percentile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NART IQ</td>
<td>10th percentile</td>
<td>18th percentile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WAIS-R (verbal)</td>
<td>13th percentile</td>
<td>Not tested</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WAIS-R (performance)</td>
<td>13th percentile</td>
<td>Not tested</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAS verbal fluency (&gt;30)</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive estimation test (&lt;60)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graded naming test (&gt;15)</td>
<td>10/30</td>
<td>16/30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digit span forwards (&gt;5)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Not tested</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rey-Osterreith complex figure (copy) (36)</td>
<td>25.5</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rey-Osterreith complex figure (recall) (30%)</td>
<td>Not tested</td>
<td>75%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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**Alien hand sign in Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease**

The clinical picture of Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (CJD) includes various movement disorders such as myoclonus, parkinsonism, hemiballism, and dystonia. We report on a patient with CJD who manifested the alien hand sign. We suggest that CJD should be included in the differential diagnosis of diseases which present with an alien hand.

Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease, one of the human prion diseases, is characterised by rapidly progressive mental and motor deterioration. Involuntary movements occur in above 90% of the patients in the course of the disease, the most common being myoclonus. Other movement disorders range from tremor to dystonia, and hemiballism. We report on a patient with CJD who presented with an alien hand.

Alien hand is a rare and striking phenomenon defined as “a patient’s failure to recognise the action of one of his hands as his own” . One of the patient’s hands acts as a stranger to the body and is uncooperative. Thus, there is loss of feeling of ownership but not loss of sensation in the affected hand. Originally described in callosal tumours, 2 the aetiology of alien hand also includes surgical callosotomy, 3 infarction of the medial frontal cortex, 4 otoparotidal lobe, and polyneuritis, 5 and corticobasal degeneration. 6

A 70 year old, right handed Jewish man born in Argentina, living in Israel for the past 20 years, was admitted to the Neurology Department. Until a month before his admission, he was apparently healthy and helped in the accounting office of the village where he lived. His neurological illness had presented insidiously during the past month with onset of gait and fine tremor. He also manifested behavioural changes, became aggressive, and had visual hallucinations, perceiving insects and mice moving through his visual field. Often, he expressed his fear from seeing that the “ceiling was
failing over him”. His wife mentioned bizarre, useless movements of his left hand which were present from the beginning of the disease.

On admission, he was awake, bradyphrenic, and partially collaborative. His convergent, habitability, and saccadic movements were normal. The affect was sad and he had partial insight for his mental dysfunction. He was disoriented for time, place, and situation. He could understand speech and was able to follow instructions involving two consecutive components. Naming was preserved. Prominent dysgraphia and dyscalculia were noticed. Immediate recall and short term memory were severely disturbed, whereas long term memory, especially for personal life events, was relatively spared. Abstract thinking was severely affected. Bimanual movements, such as clapping, were extremely difficult.

The cranial nerves were normal as were ocular fundi. The motor examination showed normal force. Deep reflexes were symmetric and plantar responses were flexor. The right arm had a dystonic posture. His gait was ataxic on a wide base.

At times, the left arm would spontaneously rise in front of the patient during speaking or while using his right hand. He was unaware of these movements until they were brought to his attention. When questioned about their purpose, the patient denied that they were voluntary. No grasping of either hand or foot was noticed. The patient had no cortical sensory loss. The patient had no cortical sensory loss.

The literature seems to describe distinct forms of alien hand. All share the occurrence of involuntary movements contrary to the patient’s stated intent, but the types of movement differ. In the callosal form, there are purposeful movements of the non-dominant hand. In the corticobasal syndrome, there is grasping and utilisation behaviour of the dominant hand. In the corticobasal degeneration, there are aimless movements of either hand.1-7 When a consequence of a traumatic or vascular pathology, alien hands can perform complex acts such as trying to tear clothes or undoing buttons. The description by MacGowan et al has characteristics of the callosal form (especially in patient 2). However, our case suggests that the alien hand sign in CJD may appear in a different type, performing less complex movements which resemble those reported by Riley et al in corticobasal degeneration.8 These authors described the alien limb as “involuntarily rising and touching the mouth and eyes” (patient 1). The patient thought that she “was powerless to stop this movement” and when directed to stop responded “that she didn’t”. Another patient’s left arm was at times “elevated in front of him”, while he was “unaware of this situation until his attention was called to it” (patient 10).

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

One common denominator between CJD, corticobasal degeneration, and progressive multifocal leukoencephalopathy, in which an alien hand sign has also been described, is multifocality. In corticobasal degeneration, it was proposed that more than one site is affected or that a “release” phenomenon occurs accounting for the aetiology of alien hand.6 In CJD, bilateral cortical damage to motor areas might be the origin of their subsequent isolation and disconnection.

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

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

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Recurrent peripheral neuropathy in a girl with celiac disease

The involvement of the peripheral nervous system (PNS) in children with celiac disease is particularly rare. Furthermore, in both children and adults with celiac disease, neurological complications are chronic and progressive.1

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

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

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

Laboratory investigations showed a white cell count of 9300/mm³. The results of the following investigations were within the normal limits: haemoglobin, erythrocyte sedimentation rate, serum urea, electrolytes, creatinine, glucose, transaminases, bilirubin, immunoglobulins (Igs), lead, iron, copper, urinalysis, urinary porphyrin, folic acid, and vitamins A, B12, B6, and E. Antibodies to Campylobacter jejuni, anti transforming virus antibodies, specific and non-specific organ autoantibodies, IgA and IgG antilipid antibodies (AGAs), IgA antinuclear antibodies (ANA), and IgA antireticulin antibodies (ARA), assessed by enzyme linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA) and immunofluorescence (IF) were also negative. Lumbar puncture was not performed. Antibodies against gangliosides GM1 and GD1b, myelin associated glycoprotein and myelin

basic protein were not tested. Nerve conduc-
tion studies were consistent with a predomi-
nately motor demyelinating peripheral neu-
ropathy (table). Her symptoms improved
spontaneously and she was discharged home
after 2 weeks. For 2 years she was asympto-
matic on a gluten free diet.

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

A haemogram showed white cell counts of
9700/mm³. Laboratory investigations were
within normal values as in the past. IgA and
IgG, AGA, IgA EMA, and IgA ARA assayed
by ELISA and IF were again negative. Nerve
conduction studies confirmed the presence of
a predominantly motor demyelinating neu-
ropathy (table). The parents refused consent
for a lumbar puncture or nerve biopsy.

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

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

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

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

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

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

An autoimmune pathogenesis in associ-
ation with strong evidence of a genetic
susceptibility has been proposed for celiac
disease. Although it is well established that
AGA, EMA, and ARA are reliable indicators
of sensitisation to gluten at least at the time
of diagnosis, in the clinical practice at follow up,
during a gluten challenge, pathological values
of these antibodies may not be detected.3
In the present case the time course of the disease
might be suggestive of an antibody mediated
response. However, we could not detect
pathological concentrations of AGA, EMA,
or ARA antibodies either during the course of
the disease or at follow up.

It is known that in celiac disease many
immunological perturbations can occur out-
side the gastrointestinal tract. Crossing of
the antigens through a damaged small intestinal
mucosa, deposition of immune complexes in
target organs, a reduction in immune surveil-

lnce, mechanism of molecular mimicry, and
activated T cell response may contribute to
the pathogenesis of the diseases associated
with celiac disease. Direct toxic effects of
gliadin and vitamin deficiency are other pos-
sible pathogenic mechanisms of damage to
the nervous system. Although we ruled out a
vitamin deficiency it is still questionable
whether a toxic neuropathy can be the case.

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

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

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Frontal release signs in older people with
peripheral vascular disease

A growing body of research examining
neurological aspects of clinically “silent” cer-
ebrovascular disease suggests that neurologi-
cal signs indicative of generalised organic
brain damage may occur in the absence of
completed stroke.1 These soft signs include
primitive reflexes (frontal release signs rep-
resenting an anatomical and functional deaf-
ferentation of cortical from subcortical struc-
tures. Primitive reflexes are known to occur in
a wide variety of diseases, including
Alzheimer’s disease2 and vascular dementia.3

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

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

Twenty five consecutive non-amputees on
the waiting list for femoropopliteal bypass
operation were compared with 25 postopera-
tive patients who had undergone elective hip
or knee replacement and a prolonged post-
rehabilitation. All participants were aged 65
and over at the time of interview. Patients
with peripheral vascular disease all had clini-
eral ischaemia. Controls were interviewed
between 6 months and 1 year after their
operation. Both groups had no history of
stroke or transient ischaemic attack.

A more detailed description of instruments
is provided elsewhere.5 All subjects were

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examined using a rating scale for the examination of frontal release signs (FRSS), with nine operationally defined items, each on a seven point semiquantitative scale. The nine reflexes were paratonia and palomental, hand grasp, foot grasp, glabellar, rooting, snout, and visual/tactile sucking reflexes. Neuropsychological measures included the assessment of frontal lobe function (trailmaking tests A and B, behavioural dyscontrol scale, and the controlled word association test) and generalised cognitive impairment (CAMCOG). Depression was assessed using the Hamilton rating scale for depression, 15 item geriatric depression scale, and diagnostic criteria for DSM IV major depressive disorder. Family history of depression, wish to die, and suicidal ideation within the past year were also recorded, as were blood pressure and a checklist for chronic physical illness.

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

Patients with peripheral vascular disease had a higher mean score on the frontal release signs scale than controls (5.8 (SD 4.6) vs 1.7 (SD 1.0)). Mann-Whitney U=144.500, Z=-3.33, two tailed p<001, as well as on glabellar and rooting reflexes (table). Only one variable (trailmaking B test time) entered into the equation; this accounted for 1.3–8.0, p=0.01).

Factitious clock drawing and constructional apraxia

A 45 year old man presented with a 1 day history of headache, possible seizures, and left sided weakness. On the day of presentation the patient’s wife had twice found him, inexplicably, on the floor. After the second such episode she brought him to hospital for evaluation. Examination disclosed a complete left hemiplegia and hemianesthesia, although muscle tone was documented to be normal and the plantar responses downgoing bilaterally. Brain CT was normal and routine blood examination was unremarkable. There were no further seizure-like episodes and the patient was transferred to this hospital 10 days later. Hemiplegia unchanged, for possible angiography and further investigations.

He was an ex-smoker with hypercholesterolaemia and peripheral vascular disease which had been treated by a left femoral angioplasty 5 years earlier. The angioplasty was complicated by the occurrence of a possible angiography related to dye injection, and phenytoin had been prescribed for a short time thereafter. There was a remote history of heavy alcohol use, but he had been abstinent for several years. His father had had a stroke at the age of 65.

Six months earlier the patient had also collapsed at home and been taken to hospital with a left hemiplegia. Brain CT at that time was normal, as were carotid Doppler studies and an echocardiogram. During that admission to hospital, several generalised seizure-like episodes were seen, some with retained consciousness, and he had again been started on phenytoin treatment. A follow up outpatient brain MRI was normal and it was concluded that the hemiplegia was non-organic in origin. He was described to have made a gradual, near complete, recovery from this first hemiplegic episode and was scheduled for an imminent return to work at the time of his relapse.

On transfer to this hospital the patient was alert, oriented, and cooperative. Although up to date on current affairs and able to describe the investigations performed at the transferring hospital, he scored only 23/30 on a mini mental state examination, with absent three word recall, impaired registration, and poor copying of a two dimensional test. A follow up outpatient further bedside neuropsychological testing showed other findings indicative of constructional apraxia and left hemineglect. Specifically, when asked to draw a clock with the time at 10 minutes to 2 o’clock, all the numbers, and the clockhands, were placed on the right hand side of the clock outline (figure A). Copying of three dimensional line drawings was also significantly impaired (figure B). When asked to bisect a line, however, the patient did so only minimally to the right of the midpoint (58% of the distance from the left side).

Cranial nerve examination suggested an incongruent and inconsistent left hemianopia to confrontation testing but was otherwise normal, including bilaterally symmetric optokinetic nystagmus. Motor examination showed paralysis of the left arm and leg, with bilaterally symmetric bulk, tone, and deep tendon reflexes. The plantar response was flexor bilaterally. Sensory examination showed decreased pinprick and absent light touch, joint position sense, and vibration sense on the entire left side. There was also impaired perception of a tuning fork’s vibration on the left side of the forehead, with a distinct demarcation in the midline. The rest of the physical examination was unrevealing.

Brain CT and MRI, CSF examination, and routine EEG were normal. Routine haematological and metabolic analyses plus erythrocyte sedimentation rate, serum lactate, prothrombin time/partial thromboplastin time, fasting serum glucose, HbA1c, serum Ig survey, and thyroid stimulating hormone were all within normal limits. A hypercoagulability profile was negative. A lipid profile showed mild hyperlipidaemia with increased low
density lipoprotein (3.92 mmol/l) and triglycerides (4.30 mmol/l) and low high density lipoprotein (0.73 mmol/l). Serum phenytoin concentration was therapeutic at 74 µmol/l. An ECG was normal.

Ophthalmological consultation and formal visual field testing demonstrated a concentratively constricted field of mild degree in the right eye and tunnel vision in the left eye.

The patient consented to overnight video-EEG monitoring and was seen on multiple occasions to move his left arm and/or leg in a normal fashion, at one point using the left arm to readjust his bed covers shortly after arousal from sleep, before glancing briefly at the video camera and completing the task with his right arm. The prolonged EEG was normal.

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

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

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

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

The inability to copy line drawings or to draw a clock is, from a neurologist’s perspective, typically associated with parietal lobe dysfunction, usually of the non-dominant hemisphere, especially if associated with left hemispatial neglect.1 To our knowledge, this is the first reported case of factitious clock drawing and constructional apraxia. Bedside mental status testing also demonstrated the more common simulated deficits of impaired attention and absent three word recall.1 In retrospect, the severe neglect on clock drawing was perhaps “too good to be true”, especially in the light of the near normal line bisection demonstrated on the same day. The mirror image distortion of the house was also very unusual and, furthermore, the mirror reversal itself is evidence of lack of clinical neglect. The distortion of the cube, however, could easily be misinterpreted as evidence of organic constructional impairment if seen in the absence of the other relevant clinical and laboratory information.

During follow up, the patient admitted to feeling tremendous occupation related stresses, and described how he had come to both fear and detest his job. Given the clear benefit to the patient of removal from his work environment, the relapse of his symptomatology just as he was scheduled for return to work after his first non-organic hemispheric episode, and the intentionality required to feign poor clock drawing and constructional apraxia, there is much to support a diagnosis of malingering.1 Nevertheless, classification as a factitious disorder is at least as justifiable in view of the patient’s willingness to undergo medical investigations, including video monitoring.

It is unclear how or when the patient acquired the information needed to mimic a constructional apraxia. Previous bedside neuropsychological evaluations may have served to familiarise him with the format of such testing, acting as an impetus to research the issue of stroke and focal brain deficits (which might also have occurred after his father’s stroke), much in the same way he is now researching conversion disorder, thereby discovering what expected answers should look like. Despite repeated questioning, however, no evidence could be gathered from the patient to support this speculation.
appropriately. Neurological examination showed contralateral gaze preference, supra-nuclear vertical gaze palsy, difficulty converging, left sided flaccid hemiparesis, and dense, left sided hemisanaesthesia. Deep tendon reflexes were absent on the left and Babinski's reflex was present on the left in addition. Anhidrosis, visual extinction and neglect were present.

At the time of onset of right sided weakness the patient insisted that he was “fine,” and an ambulance was called over his objections. After being examined, the patient acknowledged that he had had a stroke, but, despite his hemiparesis, insisted that he was ready to go home and go back to work. His belief in his ability to walk led to near falls, and he moved more slowly than the nurses had expected. In à propos, he told the nurses that someone else’s arm was in his bed. On one occasion, holding up his left arm with his right, he told the nurses to, “take it away; it keeps scratching me.” That the left arm “smelled funny” was another reason he wanted the nurses to take it away.

Four weeks after the stroke he first acknowledged that his left arm belonged to him. He seemed to plainly and unhesitatingly accept that it was his hand. He contrasted this with his right arm, and he said, “because they say I’m disabled.” The patient was noted to praise extravagantly the hospital staff and the nurses. He had a good appetite. When beginning to eat, he would look at the food, and the nurses found him “talkative.” He was noted to praise extravagantly the hospital staff and the nurses. He had a good appetite. When beginning to eat, he would look at the food, and the nurses found him “talkative.” He was noted to praise extravagantly the hospital staff and the nurses. He had a good appetite. When beginning to eat, he would look at the food, and the nurses found him “talkative.” He was noted to praise extravagantly the hospital staff and the nurses. He had a good appetite. 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less commonly (only 1 of 74 seizures recorded). A review in 1996 of the “ictal bradycardia syndrome” showed only 15 documented cases in the literature of either bradycardia or asystole associated with seizures. Most patients had temporal lobe seizures. The longest duration of asystole previously reported is in a 17 year old man with temporal lobe epilepsy who sustained a 22 second pause in cardiac output. More typically the asystolic periods in documented cases are in the region of 5–10 seconds. Shorter duration asystole may not compromise cerebral function sufficiently to cause loss of consciousness. Implantation of a cardiac pacemaker is advocated but does not ensure that lapses of consciousness are eliminated if these are directly related to the seizure rather than to the secondary asystole. We report on a patient with epileptic cardiac asystole of 25 seconds duration demonstrated by prolonged simultaneous EEG/ECG monitoring which responded well to pacemaker insertion.

A previously well 34 year old right handed builder was referred with a 1 year history of fortnightly episodes of loss of consciousness. There was no associated warning, aura, chest pain, or palpitations and the patient was only aware of the episode once consciousness was lost.

16 Channel ictal EEG (eight channels illustrated with ECG) showing electrographic seizure onset and subsequent bradycardia and asystole.
restored and he found himself lying on the floor. On recovery there was no confusion, drowsiness, dysphasia, or diuresis. Often, however, he sustained soft tissue injuries to his face and scalp.

Witnesses reported that the patient would, without warning, suddenly collapse to the ground where he would remain unresponsive, inaccessible, and motionless for 90 to 120 seconds. On two occasions he appeared confused and disorientated immediately before a collapse. During the period of unconsciousness he would demonstrate no involuntary movements, orofacial automatisms, or cyanosis but he would become pale and “ashen” while staring straight ahead with a glazed look.

On resumption of the episode his heart rate would return to normal and within 2 minutes he would have fully recovered. Unusually during one reported episode of unconsciousness he was seen to briefly extend the fingers of both hands.

He was admitted to his local hospital and CT, MRI, interictal EEG, and 24 hour ECG were normal. No episodes were witnessed while he was an inpatient but they were then reported twice within 10 seconds of each other before he was started on phenytoin, with no benefit. Carbamazepine was added, again with minimal effect.

The patient was then referred to the Epilepsy Assessment Centre of The National Society for Epilepsy and National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery for further investigation and management.

Cardiovascular and neurological examination was normal as were MRI and routine interictal EEG. Sixteen channel ambulatory EEG using an Oxford Instruments digital EEG receiver was performed continuously for 10 hours before an episode was captured. Interictally rare spikes were seen over the right frontocentrotemporal region during sleep. The interictal rare spikes were seen over the right frontocentrotemporal region during sleep. The interictal rare spikes were seen over the right frontocentrotemporal region during sleep.

The patient was found lying on the floor, regaining consciousness at about 07:06. The event EEG showed a short run of bilateral semierhythmic 2–3 Hz activity at 07:04:34 (figure A), persisting for 8 seconds before being obscured by muscle and movement artefact. Twenty seconds later in the right limb. His ECG, change, at 07:04:58, the ECG changed from sinus rhythm at 90 bpm to a brief period of sinus bradycardia, followed by a period of asystole with only very occasional ventricular complexes lasting 10 seconds (figure B). A few seconds later in the right limb, after a few seconds of bradycardia then tachycardia, sinus rhythm was restored. Throughout the episode the QT interval on the ECG remained within normal limits. The ECG became visible again 16 seconds into the asystolic period, at which time it was dominated by diffuse low amplitude slow activity at <1–2 Hz which persisted for 10 seconds (figure C). This was followed by marked attenuation of the EEG activity over the next 10 seconds before large amplitude generalised rhythmic <1 Hz activity became apparent. Diffuse theta activity was seen for a further 15 seconds before the EEG returned to its resting state.

A VVI permanent pacemaker was inserted. The phenytoin was withdrawn and replaced by lamotrigine. Carbamazepine was left unchanged. The patient was discharged, his medication left unaltered, and at follow up 9 months later reported no further episodes.

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

It has been hypothesised that there is laterisation with respect to central autonomic cardiac control with an increase in heart rate seen after an increase in activation of amygdaloid and inactivation of the left hemisphere and a decrease in heart rate on right hemispheric inactivation. Experimental stimulation of the rostral posterior insular cardiac arhythmia and a secondary central arrhythmia is possible with simultaneous EEG/ECG recordings.

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Respiratory insufficiency in a patient with hereditary neuropathy with liability to pressure palsy

Hereditary neuropathy with liability to pressure palsies (HNPP) is an autosomal dominant disorder, the molecular basis of which is a 1.5 Mb deletion in chromosome 17p11.2 including the peripheral myelin protein-22 (PMP-22) gene. HNPP typically presents recurrent pressure palsies of peripheral nerves, such as the axillary, median, radial, ulnar, or peroneal nerves, at common entrapment sites. Respiratory muscle weakness has not been previously reported in HNPP. We describe a patient with HNPP in whom respiratory failure and proximal muscle weakness were prominent features.

The patient started to have dypnoea on exertion at the age of 44. At the age of 47, he noticed a slowly progressive weakness of the pelvic girdle and lower limbs. At the age of 57, he experienced difficulty in going up stairs. However, he was almost independent in daily life. At the age of 60, he was admitted to Horton Red Cross Hospital as an emergency patient with a coma due to CO intoxication (PCO2, 117.6; PO2, 64.0). Responding to mechanical ventilatory support, he completely recovered consciousness within a day. His respiratory condition in the daytime improved to that previously. However, he needed mechanical ventilation during sleep because of nocturnal hyperventilation.

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

In a neurological examination, the patient's mental state and cranial nerves were normal. Evidence of muscular strength was normal. Pelvic lordosis was found. The muscular atrophy was prominent in the shoulder girdle, intercostal muscles, paravertebral muscles, and pelvic girdle, and moderate atrophy was present in all four limbs (figure). There was moderate weakness of the shoulder and pelvic girdle and mild weakness of the distal limbs. The thorax showed poor respiratory movement, and the patient showed paradoxical movement of the abdomen in the supine position. Tendon reflexes were hypotonic in all limbs. The patient's sensations of touch and pain were mildly impaired in the four extremities. Temperature was normal. His vital capacity was 1.9 l (55% of the normal mean) in the sitting position, but 1.3 l (38%) in the supine position. The percentage of forced expiratory volume in 1 second was normal (98%).

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delayed (8.7 ms (normal<8.0)). Sensory nerve conduction studies showed a reduced amplitude of sensory nerve action potentials and conduction slowing in all the nerves tested. Electromyography carried out in the supraspinatus, deltoid, biceps, flexor carpi ulnaris, brachioradialis, quadriceps femoris, biceps femoritis, tibialis anterior, and gastrocnemius muscles showed polyphasic motor unit potentials of long duration, but denervation potentials were rare. A left sural nerve biopsy showed scattered tomaculous thickening of the myelin sheath and some abnormal thin axonal myelin sheaths. The density of myelinated fibres was reduced (5726/mm²).

A gene analysis disclosed a 53% gene dose of PMP-22 related to normal controls, using Southern blots of DNA digested with EcoRI.

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

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

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

The weakness of the truncal muscles, including the respiratory accessory muscle, is a possible cause of respiratory failure in our patient. On the other hand, he had experienced hypventilation in the supine posture and paradoxical movement of the abdomen, which suggested diaphragmatic weakness. Also, chest radiography showed poor movement of the diaphragm. Although the prolongation of distal latency in the phrenic nerve was mild considering the severity of respiratory failure, assessment of axonal loss is not possible with phrenic nerve stimulation. In fact, phrenic nerve latency is not necessarily associated with pulmonary dysfunction in HMSN.

Diffuse proximal weakness in our patient is an uncommon finding as for HNPP. Mancardi et al reported on three patients with progressive sensory-motor polyneuropathy associated with 17p11.2 deletion, and the initial symptom of one patient was proximal weakness in one arm. We propose that our patient represents a clinical phenotypic variability among HNPP. It may be necessary to pay attention to respiratory function in HNPP.

We thank Dr T Yamamoto from the University of Occupational and Environmental Health for the gene analysis and Mr T Nagase from Chiba University for his technical help with the sural nerve biopsy.

Spinal accessory neuropathy and internal jugular thrombosis after carotid endarterectomy

Spinal accessory neuropathy is a rare complication of carotid endarterectomy (CEA). Internal jugular venous thrombosis after CEA has also been reported rarely, but is likely more common; as internal jugular

venous thrombosis is often asymptomatic, or presents with non-specific pain, it is probably unrecognised in many cases.1 Concurrent ipsilateral spinal accessory neuropathy and internal jugular venous thrombosis after CEA is expected to be rare, and this is underscored by the lack of published cases. Despite this apparent rarity, a common pathogenetic mechanism for postoperative spinal accessory neuropathy and internal jugular venous thrombosis may be present, at least in some cases, which may lead to the consideration of the possibility of both when either is discovered.

We report on a patient who developed right spinal accessory neuropathy and internal jugular venous thrombosis after right CEA. A 59 year old man underwent right CEA for possibly symptomatic stenosis. Angiography had shown 90% stenosis of the right internal carotid. The operation was done under general anaesthesia. The carotid bifurcation was unusually distal, necessitating a long dissection and high retraction. No immediate postoperative complications were evident. The next day, the patient complained of mild pain at the operative site, but he did not notice any weakness. The pain spread into his right shoulder within several days; at that time, he also noted difficulty raising his right arm. His symptoms worsened further a few weeks later. The symptoms persisted, and he presented for neurological evaluation 4 months after CEA. At that time, he had some induration along the incision site and a palpable cord within the right supravacular fossa. There was moderate atrophy of the right sternocleidomastoid and trapezius, with right shoulder drooping and minor right scapular wearing. Right arm abduction produced more prominent scapular winging and was limited to 90 degrees due to pain and weakness. Electrodiagnostic studies were consistent with partial right accessory neuropathy with minor denervation of the right trapezius. Cervical ultrasonography and MRI demonstrated right internal jugular venous thrombosis. The patient was treated with a shoulder support, analgesics, and low dose aspirin. There was no significant clinical change 1 year after CEA. Repeat electradiography and MRI were consistent with chronic right spinal accessory neuropathy, and repeat ultrasonography showed persistent right internal jugular venous thrombosis. Corticosteroids were not used, as those were thought to pose a significant risk. The first report on spinal accessory neuropathy after CEA was in 1982,1 since then, there have been several case reports and small series.1 A 1996 review of reports of cranial neuropathy after CEA disclosed only one patient with spinal accessory neuropathy in over 3000 cases.1 Although the authors did not include several other reports2 which, taken together, may seem to suggest a somewhat higher incidence, the overall small number of reported cases in proportion to the hundreds of thousands of CEsAs that have been done worldwide suggests that clinically significant spinal accessory neuropathy is a rare complication. More frequent spinal accessory neuropathy after CEA may be more frequent. The cause of spinal accessory neuropathy after CEA is usually not well established, but intraoperative nerve stretching or compression from retraction is most often invoked.3 Delayed onset (after 3 weeks) has been noted in some; for these patients, postoperative inflammation and scarring seem more likely causes. Spinal accessory nerve transection or trauma/infarction/infarct (arterial or venous) are other possibilities. As in our patient, high carotid dissection and retraction have been reported to precede spinal accessory neuropathy.1, 4

The spinal accessory nerve courses along the internal jugular vein and near the internal carotid artery, typically well above the carotid bifurcation. This should suggest that a high carotid bifurcation would place the nerve at risk. Whether this realisation may lead to any technical modification to decrease the risk of spinal accessory neuropathy in those with a high bifurcation is unclear.

From our search, internal jugular venous thrombosis after CEA has been reported in only one case.5 As Southcott et al noted, retraction of the internal jugular during CEA may cause complete occlusion, leading to thrombosis from venous stasis or endothelial injury. Other causes of internal jugular venous thrombosis include jugular cannulation, blunt cervical trauma, and a hypercoagulable state. Internal jugular venous thrombosis may occur early after neck dissection, often with recanalisation after several months.6

The presence of induration about the incision site and a palpable supraclavicular cord in our patient led us to suspect venous thrombosis. Internal jugular venous thrombosis may often be asymptomatic. Potential symptoms of internal jugular venous thrombosis include headache, dysphagia, and anterolateral neck pain, tenderness, and swelling. In addition to perivenous induration, fever and leukocytosis may occur.7 Common pathogenetic mechanisms for spinal accessory neuropathy and internal jugular venous thrombosis may include intraoperative traction, haematoma, and postoperative inflammation and scarring. Although the onset of either spinal accessory neuropathy or internal jugular venous thrombosis in our patient cannot be determined precisely, it is likely that both developed at about the same time. The delayed worsening of motor function in spinal accessory neuropathy in this case suggests postoperative scarring or inflammation. The lack of improvement after a year, as in some other cases of spinal accessory neuropathy after CEA, implies considerable axonal injury, but does not clarify the manner of injury.

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

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

A 33 year old man had a severe aphasia on awakening in the morning of 23 January 1996. He did not complain of other symptoms. He was referred to our department on 26 January 1999. He had a Wernicke aphasia with a slight right sided face and arm weakness and a right Babinski sign. His blood pressure was 140/60 and his pulse 54 per minute. Brain CT showed signs of extensive left middle cerebral artery infarct. Cervical ultrasound duplex scanning and cerebral angiography were normal. Cerebral CSF examination was normal. There was no coagulopathy. D-dimers were within the normal range (360 ng/ml, normal <500 ng/ml). Creatinine was in the normal range (102 µmol/litre). Transesophageal echocardiography and ECG were also normal except for a patent foramen ovale.

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

Although a paradoxical embolism through a patent foramen ovale in this patient cannot be excluded as it was recently reported in a 22 year old transatlantic air flight, there was no deep venous thrombosis and D-dimers were normal. However, ephedrine has an indirect sympathomimetic action, and has been used for arteriole vasconstriction in addition to other catecholaminergic effects. Both ischaemic and haemorrhagic stroke associated with ephedrine use have been reported.8 Acute myocardial infarction and acute psychosis have also been reported after taking ephedrine and other sympathomimetic drugs,9 Ephedrine and its metabolites are natural products that are used in non-prescription medicines for multiple uses. MaHuang extract (corresponding to 20 mg ephedra alkaloids) is used in folk medicine for multiple uses. Do not use this product in combination with sympathomimetic drugs as in our patient. Renal dysfunction has also been reported after oral creatine supplements. Our patient had a slight increase in creatinine concentration although...
it remained in the normal range. Whether the use of high doses of caffeine can enhance the cardiovascular effect of ephedrine remains a possibility as stroke after taking a combination of caffeine and amphetamine has been reported.1

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

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

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Petroclival meningioma as a cause of ipsilateral cervicofacial dyskinesias

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

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

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

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

An MRI study showed a large gadolinium enhancing tumour within the left cerebellar pontine angle extending to the cavaux Meckelii with marked displacement of the brainstem to the contralateral side (figure A and B). Cerebral angiography showed a discrete blush of the tumour as typically seen in meningiomas. The tumour was totally removed by a combined transpetrosal supratentorial and infratentorial suprasigmoidal approach. The postoperative course was uneventful and there were no new deficits. The facial palsy improved slightly as well as the trigeminal hypoaesthesia. Audiometry remained unchanged. Postoperative imaging showed no residual tumour and the displacement of the brain stem within the posterior fossa had resolved (figure C). Marked improvement of the left sided craniofacial dyskinesias occurred during the next weeks.

The postoperative improvement of the dystonic and choreic grimacing and the cervical dystonia indicates a causal association between the petroclival meningioma and the segmental hyperkinetic movement disorders. Such a relation is supported also by the absence of a familial history of movement disorders and the absence of previous exposure to neuroleptic medication. Hyperkinetic movement disorders due to tumours of the brainstem or of the posterior fossa have been reported only rarely. Asymmetric blepharospasm was recently found in a patient with an ipsilateral mesencephalic cyst. Hemifacial spasm was seen in patients with metastatic neureinomas, meningiomas, and epidermoid tumours of the cerebellopontine angle. Acoustic neurinomas and anaplastic pontocerebellar glioma can be associated with facial myokymia and spas tic parietal facial contracture. Also, cervical dystonia due to tumours of the cerebellopontine angle have been reported recently.

The pathophysiological mechanisms responsible for dystonic movement disorders connected by structural or functional lesions of the brainstem are not fully understood. The possibility of denervation supersensitivity of cranial nerve nuclei has been proposed previously. Alternatively, enhanced excitability of brainstem interneurons has been suggested. This pathophysiological mechanism is supported by the findings of blink reflex studies in patients with blepharospasm, spasmodic dysphonia, and cervical dystonia. Tolosa et al found significantly less inhibition of the test stimulus polysynaptic late response and marked enhancement of the recovery curve of the late response under such conditions compared with the response in healthy subjects. Our case provides further evidence that functional impairment by compression and distortion of the brain stem may cause hyperkinetic cerebellofugal movement disorders. It is not supported also to know that such movement disorders are accessible to surgical treatment of the underlying pathology. Therefore, patients with cranial or cervical dystonia or choreic dyskinesia should undergo MR imaging to rule out a surgically treatable cause.

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Acute multifocal cerebral white matter lesions during transfer factor therapy

Transfer factor is an active substance of unknown structure present in dialysable leucocyte extract which is assumed to transfer cell mediated immunity in an antigen specific fashion. The mechanisms of action of transfer factor are still far from clear; in vitro dialysable leucocyte extract increases macrophage activation and interleukin (IL) 1 production and enhances leucocyte chemotaxis and natural killer function. Transfer factor has been reported to stimulate the cell mediated antigen specific response in patients with various infections; therefore, transfer with transfer factor has been suggested in patients with selective deficits in cell mediated immunity such as some refractory neoplasms and chronic infections. Moreover, it has been used in the treatment of uveitis. Administration of dialysable leucocyte extract has been shown to be free of hypersensitivity, long lasting side effects, or complications, except for transient hyperpyrexia.

We report on a patient in whom multiple cerebral white matter lesions developed after taking dialysable leucocyte extract orally for uveitis. A 28 year old man was admitted to hospital because of headache, mental confusion, and right hemiparesis. He had had recurrent bilateral uveitis from the age of 12 to 14 with relapsing pain in the right eye. In January 1995 retinal vasculitis was diagnosed at fundoscopy and in July 1995 he started oral transfer factor as dialysable leucocyte extract twice a week. He complained of generalised weakness after the second dose and the referring symptoms developed after the third dose. Neurological examination on admission showed mental confusion and severe right spastic hemiplegia with a right Babinski’s sign. No fever or meningism was present.

Laboratory examinations on admission showed a slight increase in total serum protein (8.4 g/l, normal 6.0–8.0 g/l), although the serum protein fraction was normal, antistreptolysin titres (355 UI/ml, normal <200 UI/ml), and anticardiolipin IgG (30 UI/ml, normal <200 UI/ml). Negative results were obtained for HIV, Torlasco, and antineutrophil cytoplasmic antibodies, lupus anticoaugulants, cryoglobulins, and neoplastic markers.

Serological investigations showed IgG but not IgM against cytomegalovirus (CMV), Herpes simplex, Varicella zoster, Epstein-Barr virus, hepatitis viruses A, B and C infection were negative. Cell, protein, and glucose concentrations in CSF were normal. No oligoclonal bands or antibody against CMV, Herpes simplex, Varicella zoster, Epstein-Barr virus, or JC virus were present. Polymerase chain reaction search for Herpes simplex 1 and 2, Varicella zoster, CMV, Epstein-Barr virus, and JC virus in the CSF was negative.

Brain MRI showed several extensive asymmetric lesions in the subcortical and periventricular cerebral white matter, some of which exerted a mass effect on the nearby CSF spaces. All lesions exhibited thick ring-like enhancement after intravenous contrast administration (figure). The brain stem, cerebellum, and cervical spinal cord were spared.

The patient had a progressive spontaneous remission of symptoms and signs. The neurological examination 20 days after onset showed slightly increased deep tendon reflexes on the right side and was normal 40 days later; all laboratory analyses were normal except for antistreptolysin titer (265 UI/ml). Two MR scans at 1 and 4 months after onset showed progressive reduction of the extension of cerebral white matter lesions, which did not show contrast enhancement. A final MR scan 20 months after onset showed further regression of lesions without contrast enhancement but a new large lesion in the left occipital white matter, which showed moderate contrast enhancement. At present, five years after the patient is in a good state of health and neurological examination and laboratory tests are normal.

The close temporal relation between assumption of dialysable leucocyte extract therapy and appearance of cerebral white matter lesions in our patient supports the possibility that the association of the two events might not be casual. Despite the absence of biopsy, we reasonably excluded
the diagnosis of vasculitis or neuro-Bechet’s disease although in the absence of biopsy. In fact, the clinical, laboratory, and MRI findings were not typical and a low titre of anticardiolipin antibodies is found in 2% of healthy subjects. The occurrence at different time of focal cerebral white matter lesions highly supports the diagnosis of multiple sclerosis, but some clinical and laboratory findings in the our patient are not typical for this condition. Mental confusion is not common at the onset of multiple sclerosis whereas it is often found in acute disseminated encephalitis. In addition, CSF without oligoclonal banding argues against a diagnosis of multiple sclerosis, whereas it is commonly found in acute disseminated encephalitis. On the other hand the possibility that acute disseminated encephalitis may recur has been accepted and on the basis of the patient’s clinical picture and CSF, we favoured such a diagnosis.

The pathogenic mechanisms underlying the triggering, development, and duration of multiple sclerosis and acute disseminated encephalitis are still far from clear despite the progress made in unravelling them. Some findings suggest that acute disseminated encephalitis and multiple sclerosis lie at the two poles of an autoimmune range, in which autoantigen reactivity is only temporary and on the basis of the patient’s clinical picture and CSF, we favoured such a diagnosis.

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

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

Abnormal calcium phosphate metabolism has not previously been associated with Asperger’s syndrome, a form of pervasive developmental disorder. Nor have symmetric calcifications of the basal ganglia, dentate nuclei and cortex, or Fahr’s disease—whether idiopathic or associated with hypoparathyroidism—previously been associated with this handicap. We present the case of a 24 year old man with Asperger’s syndrome, primary hypoparathyroidism, and multifocal brain calcifications. According to medical history, the patient’s mother had received weekly injections of Depopovera during pregnancy. A single child born after a normal term delivery, he underwent surgery for an inguinal hernia at 3 weeks. Developmental milestones were only moderately delayed. At 9 months, he rolled instead of crawling. He walked at 15 months, spoke at 2 years with poor articulation, and still speaks in short, unelaborated sentences. His social and language development lagged in grade school and he occasionally got into fights. In late adolescence, antisocial behaviour took the form of shoplifting and repeated long distance calls to pornographic hot lines. As an adult, his social adaptation remains poor: he currently lives with his mother and works irregularly as a dishwasher in a restaurant. He is indifferent, isolated, and resists novelty. He enjoys repetitive and solitary activities such as slot machine games and playing the piano.

Neurological examination showed bilateral hyperreflexia, mild imprecision of fine finger movements, dysgraphaesia on sensory testing, and a manieristic gripping handshake. There were no extrapyramidal

Brain CT, axial section: dense calcific deposits in the basal ganglia, thalamus, and orbital frontal cortex consistent with Fahr’s disease.

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Brain CT, axial section: dense calcific deposits in the basal ganglia, thalamus, and orbital frontal cortex consistent with Fahr’s disease.
symptoms. His IQ score was in the low range (WAIS-C=85 at the age of 13; Barbeau-Pinard=82 at the age of 17). He also presented an impairment on the Tower of London test, which measures executive function, and in a task assessing the understanding of others’. These two findings are reliably present in pervasive developmental disorders, in this IQ range. In addition, his performance on the Tower of Toronto test disclosed impaired performance in procedural learning. Psychiatric assessment showed scores above the cut off for autism according to the autism diagnostic interview (ADI), a standardised interview that requires specific training and those administering it to have a 0.90 reliability with other researchers. The subject was positive for the diagnosis of autism, being above cut off values in the three relevant areas of communication, social interactions, restricted interests, and repetitive behaviours. Nevertheless, he did not present delay in language acquisition or morphological atypicalities in language development, which corresponds to DSM-IV criteria for Asperger’s syndrome.

Brain CT showed dense calcification in the basal ganglia, thalamus, cerebellar dentate nucleus, and orbitofrontal cortex, consistent with Fahr’s disease (figure). Serum phosphate concentrations were normalised and his phosphatase activity in the basal ganglia relative to the cerebral cortex. A fine banded karyotype was normal. Serum calcium was 1.55 mM (normal 2.15–2.55 mM), phosphate 1.69 mM (normal 0.70–1.50 mM); the ionised calcium was 0.80 mM at pH 7.4 (normal 1.19–1.34 mM); urinary calcium was 0.8 mM (normal 2.5–6.3 mM). Serum parathyroid hormone was below 0.6 (normal 1.0–6.55 μU), and a nuclear scan of the parathyroid glands showed an absence of activity. With a combination of vitamin D3-calcium supplementation and cognitive-behavioural therapy, serum calcium, and phosphate concentrations normalised and his behaviour improved marginally.

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

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

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

Hypertrophic atlantoaxial ligament: an unusual cause of compression of the upper spinal cord

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

A 66 year old woman presented with a rapid development of progressive spastic tetraparesis and an unremarkable medical history. There was no osteosclerosis or instability on plain cervical radiography and C.T. A bone scan with 111Tc was unremarkable. Magnetic resonance imaging showed a retro-odontoid extradural mass that was homogeneous and isointense on T1 weighted signal, demarcated no enhancement after intravenous gadolinium contrast, and was compressing the upper cervical spinal cord (figure). The laboratory tests were normal, confirming the absence of rheumatoid arthritis, metabolic disease, or gout. Surgical removal via a transoral approach with a minimal bony resection was direct and provided sufficient space to obtain spinal cord decompression. It was followed by a posterior C1–C2 fusion. Macroscopically, the lesion had no capsule and resembled a hypertrophic ligamentum flavum. Microscopically, it was non-inflammatory, hypocellular, and ligamentary pieces found within the mass appeared fibrous and almost disintegrated. The patient regained normal neurological function. Over a 3 year follow up period there was no recurrence.

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

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

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

Brain CT on admission showed a discrete and linear high density at the left ambient cistern. On the next day CT showed an obscure low density at the dorsolateral midbrain in addition to the previous lesion (figure). Brain MRI, taken 3 days later, demonstrated an intraparenchymal lesion, at the surface of the left dorsolateral midbrain in high intensity on a T2 weighted image. The high intensity lesion corresponding to haematoma on CT was seen in the ambient cistern (figure). Taking both CT scans and MRI into consideration, this case was diagnosed as traumatic midbrain contusion.

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

T2 weighted images 1 month later showed a more localised lesion in the same area. The coronal slices showed a high intensity lesion at the level of lower midbrain coinciding with the tentorium level, disclosed as a low line between the occipital lobe and the cerebellar hemisphere (figure). The neurological deficits almost disappeared 6 months later.

Somatosensory impairment including pain is one of the most common complaints among patients with craniovascular injury. Responsible lesions for sensory impairment, detectable by neuroimaging studies, almost always accompany associated neurological deficits. 1-3 To our knowledge, a selective injury at the spinothalamic or trigeminothalamic tracts due to closed head injury has not been highlighted in the neurological literature.

The MR images in our case showed a discrete lesion at the dorsolateral midbrain. Topographical study at this lower midbrain level showed that the lateral and ventral spinothalamic and ventral trigeminothalamic tracts pass at the surface of this level by carrying a superficial somatofacial sensory input. 1 The lesion shown in our MR images seemed to be localised to these tracts. The medial lemniscus for the deep sensation and lateral lemniscus and nucleus of inferior colliculus associated with hearing function run ventral and dorsal to these tracts, respectively; which were seemingly spared in our patient. 1 The topographical anatomy seemed to correspond to the neurological manifestations of our patient.

The mechanism of midbrain injury in our patient was speculated to be due to tentorial coup injury based on MR images. The location of contusion was at the lower dorsolateral midbrain, coinciding with the tentorial edge level. Initiation of injury was the surface of the midbrain; however, due to the proximity of the tentorial edge to the midbrain on the injured side, tentorial contact to the midbrain supposedly occurred more readily. Brain MRI findings support the anatomical features of this tentorial coup injury. This injury is not rare in patients with severe head injury, accompanied by other intracranial lesions, and is often caused by lateral displacement of the brain stem relative to the tentorium. It is influenced by congenital variation in the size and shape of the tentorial incisura. 1,4 The brain stem of the patient with a narrow incisura is more vulnerable to the direct contusive effects than that of a patient with a wider incisura. Therefore, even in minor head injury, this mechanism may occur in patients preconditioned with narrow tentorial incisura, which may have been the case in our patient.

The concept of tentorial coup injury against the midbrain is not new. 1 It usually accompanies various degrees of conscious disturbance and other long tract signs, sensory deficits as well as cerebellar and cranial nerve palsy due to the midbrain lesion or other associated intracranial lesions. 1,4,5 The clinical manifestation of our patient may represent one of the mildest forms of the midbrain contusion. Thus, when we see a patient with post-traumatic sensory deficit, the possibility of this tentorial injury should be kept in mind even in minor head injury.

**References**

CORRESPONDENCE

Toluene induced postural tremor

We read with interest the article by Miyagi et al1 and comment on the medical treatment of toluene induced tremor. Microdialysis experiments in rats have shown that inhalation of toluene increases extracellular $\gamma$-amino butyric acid (GABA) concentrations within the cerebellar cortex2 which probably explains why GABA agonists including benzodiazepines (for example, clonazepam) are not very effective in toluene induced tremor and ataxia. Rat experiments also showed a 50% reduction in brain catecholaminergic neurons.3 Degeneration of certain cerebellar pathways is probably responsible for the loss of this dopaminergic innervation.4 Dopamine agonists could therefore be of potential interest in the treatment of toluene induced tremor. This hypothesis was explored in a recently described case,5 which showed remarkable clinical and iconographic similarities with that described by Miyagi et al6: (a) long history of chronic toluene inhalation, (b) marked postural tremor, (c) progressive worsening of the symptoms despite abstinence from inhalant misuse, and (d) mild cerebral atrophy and marked low signal intensity in globus pallidi, thalami, red nuclei, and substantia nigrae on T2 weighted MRI. As our patient’s tremor was progressive, medical treatment with a dopamine agonist was considered. One particular agent (amantadine) caught our attention because it had proved successful in the treatment of postural tremor in cases of heredodegenerative disorders in which the dentatorubro-olivary system is affected. In addition, there is evidence that catecholaminergic pathways are also involved in this type of ataxias, supported by loss of neurons of these neurotransmitters in the CSF of patients with heredodegenerative ataxias.6 In our patient, amantadine hydrochloride (100 mg twice daily) abolished postural tremor and ataxia completely over a 3 month period.

Subsequently, the treatment was discontinued, which resulted in relapse of the tremor and ataxia. We were challenged to amantadine, which progressively offered him the same clinical improvement in tremor as in the first 3 months. After 3 years the treatment was discontinued without any sign of relapse.

Although this finding needs confirmation, amantadine treatment could form a new approach in the medical treatment for toluene induced tremor and ataxia. Intractable cases would then justify a more aggressive approach such as ventromedial thalamotomy.

CORRESPONDENCE

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

Nabbout et al7 have attempted to identify the risk factors for the progression of subependymal nodules into giant cell astrocytomas (SEGAs) in children with tuberous sclerosis complex. In attempting to develop screening strategies that avoid iatrogenic morbidity, patient inconvenience, and excess cost, it is essential that the natural history of these lesions in the general population of patients with tuberous sclerosis complex be understood well.

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

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

Identifying the risk factors that can tell us which subependymal lesions will become invasive is important. As subependymal nodules and SEGAs seem to be histologically identical it is unlikely that pathologists will provide an answer. The study of Nabbout et al7 tests some new hypotheses but not others. However, the definitive answer will not be provided by studies of selected samples but by follow up of a population based sample of patients with tuberous sclerosis complex. In the absence of such a study we would be cautious about implementing screening programmes based on what may be misleading criteria.

Toxicological and clinical aspects of toluene induced tremor and ataxia

Although this finding needs confirmation, subependymal nodules and SEGAs seem to be histologically identical it is unlikely that pathologists will provide an answer. The study of Nabbout et al7 tests some new hypotheses and reiterates some others. However, the definitive answer will not be provided by studies of selected samples but by follow up of a population based sample of patients with tuberous sclerosis complex. In the absence of such a study we would be cautious about implementing screening programmes based on what may be misleading criteria.


2 Atypical form of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis: a new term to define a previously well known form of ALS

We read with interest the article by Sasaki et al8 concerning the atypical form of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS). The pattern of muscular atrophy in these patients differed from that of typical ALS in that severe muscle involvement was confined to the upper limbs, predominantly the proximal portion and shoulder girdle, sparing the face and the legs until late in the disease’s course or until the terminal stage.

Over the past few years, we have noticed a growing interest in the renaming of this clinical form of ALS, which has its origins and predomination in the proximal muscles and upper limbs and little or no effect of either a bulbar nature or in the lower limbs. Thus Hu et al9 coined the term flail arm syndrome, to describe a subtype of patients affected by ALS that predominantly showed signs of lower motor neuron disease in the upper limbs, without significant functional involvement of other regions on clinical presentation. This subtype of patients was clinically characterised by the display of progressive atrophy and weakness affecting the proximal muscles in the upper limb muscles in a more or less symmetric manner.

Recently, along these lines, Katz et al10 described a series of patients affected by an adult onset motor neuron disorder restricted to the upper limbs, with severe proximal and varying degrees of distal involvement, calling it amyotrophic brachial diplegia syndrome.

Other terms used in the past to refer to this form of ALS have been dangling arm syndrome, suspended form, orangutan sign, and hence the positive predictive value of any screening tool in a general population of patients with tuberous sclerosis complex is likely to be different from those described in the highly selected group studied in this paper. The second is that the authors have made a potentially misleading decision to exclude more than half their study sample because they do not have lesions close to the foramen of Monroe. It is not certain that all SEGAs arise from lesions close to the foramen. They may arise in the fourth ventricle. Furthermore, the late presentation of many lesions in the lateral ventricles has, in the past, precluded accurate determination of their point of origin. This study selects 24 of 60 patients who had met their entry criteria but does not state how many of the excluded 36 patients had no subependymal nodules or nodules that were not “near the foramen of Monroe”. Inclusion criteria are given for what constitutes proximity to the foramen. The authors were apparently not blinded at the point when they selected which patients had lesions near to the foramen and therefore there is an obvious issue of potential selection bias.

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

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3 Bjorneras S, Naalsund LU. Biochemical changes in different brain areas after toluene inhalation. Toxicology 1998;49:36.


“man-in-the-barrel” syndrome has even been suggested.

Probably all these terms used to define this variation of ALS are synonyms for an older, well-known condition, the scapulopelvic form, or the chronic anterior poliomyelitis reported by Vulpin, in 1886 and known in Franco-German literature as Vulpin-Bernhardt’s form of ALS. At certain stages of the disease’s clinical course, it is probably difficult to differentiate it from progressive muscular atrophy (PMA). Some authors have said that PMA with late onset scapulopelvic distribution (over 45 years of age) generally leads to ALS as a matter of course.1

Be that as it may, the truth is that this atypical form of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis behaves differently from typical ALS. The comparative study with the rest of the ALS group supplied important clinical findings, such as little or no functional impairment of the bulbar muscles or legs. Hu et al also made four important statistical discoveries.

(1) The prevalence of this form of ALS constituted 10% of the ALS group as a whole (p = 0.05). (2) The age of onset of this form was similar to the rest of ALS. (3) There was a clear predominance among men (the male/female ratio was 10% of the ALS group as a whole). (4) There was a longer median survival (a median survival of 57 months compared with 39 months in the ALS group).

Some of these patients have a long ALS clinical course, in that they usually preserve ambulatory ability, albeit with gait disorders, for more than 5 years after the onset of symptoms, in that they usually preserve function tests (FVC, PImax, and PEmax). Cortical blood flow (cerebral cortical blood flow (cerebral blood flow)) was preserved in their patients, because our postulated that iso-

Isolated dysarthria

We read with interest the article by Urban et al. Using transcranial magnetic stimulation, the authors demonstrated electrophysiologically evidence for a central monoparesis of the tongue in patients with isolated dysarthria from stroke.1 As in their patients transcranial magnetic stimulation induced absent or delayed corticofugal responses at the tongue, the authors ascribed isolated dysarthria to interruption of the corticofugal pathways (V 1 Sasaki, lwata M. Motor neuron disease with isolated dysarthria. J Neurol Neurosurg Psychiatry 1999;65:381–5

Sasaki replies:

We thank Gamaez et al for their interest in our article concerning the atypical form of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS).1

Over many years, several researchers have recognized this peculiar distribution of muscle atrophy in clinical practice. The clinical manifestations consist of the muscular atrophy confined to the shoulder girdle and the arms (proximally dominant), absence of deep tendon reflex in the legs, and subluxation of the shoulder joints. Some patients progress to bulbar involvement, as Gamaez et al cite, many times have been coined to describe this peculiar pattern of the muscular atrophy such as dangling arm, orang utan sign, dead arm sign, suspension form, atypical form of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS).

J Neurol Neurosurg Psychiatry 1998;65:950–1.


Vulpin-Bernhardt’s form of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS).


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Urban et al reply:

Okuda et al draw attention to their article on pure dysarthria in Stroke1 which we read with much interest. They refer to 12 patients with pure dysarthria, 11 of whom showed multiple bilateral infarctions involving the internal capsule and corona radiata. The main difference to our series of seven patients is the multiple involvement of the brain. We think that the single lesion as collected by us is a more appropriate approach to correlate lesion topography with impaired function. The findings of Okuda et al are in line with our conclusion that interruption of the corticollingual pathway is the pathogenesis of dysarthria of extracerebellar origin. Obviously, impairment of the corticollingual tract of one hemisphere by a single small lesion is an adequate condition for dysarthria. The patients of Okuda et al had more severe vascular disorder of the brain than our patients as can be concluded from the multiple infarctions. Thus, the bilateral frontal cortical hypoperfusion as disclosed by SPECT in the series of Okuda et al may be due to infarction in other parts of the brain compared with the lesion causing pure dysarthria.

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Motor cortical excitability in Huntington’s disease

We read with great interest the paper of Hanajima et al1 reporting that intracortical inhibition of the motor cortex is normal in patients with chorea of various origins. At variance with their results we previously1 found a reduced intracortical inhibition in a group of patients with genetically confirmed Huntington’s disease. Hanajima et al suggest that the discrepancies between the two studies2 may be due to patient selection as they included patients with early stage Huntington’s disease to “study the pathophysiology of chorea unaffected by other disorders movement.” They postulated that our cases, because of the reported correlation of a dyskinetic rating scale, had an earlier stage of the disease possibly with coexisting dystonia or rigidity. These assertions deserve some comments.

The mean disease duration of our nine patients with Huntington’s disease was 6.2 (4.1) years which is actually shorter than the duration of the six patients reported by Hanajima et al3 (8.3 (5.9) years). Most of our patients could be considered in an early stage of the disease, as the Unified Huntington’s disease rating scale, and none presented dystonia, rigidity, or any other additional movement disorder. In this regard, however, it should be pointed out that bradykinesia is often associated with chorea in patients with Huntington’s disease and may even precede the appearance of choreic dyskinesia.4 Chorea itself is often reduced in the more advanced Huntington’s disease stages.5 It is unlikely, therefore, that any neurophysiological approach can test purely chorea even in the early Huntington’s disease stages. In addition, different mechanisms are involved in Huntington’s disease and other choreas as suggested by the lack of impairment of somatosensory evoked responses and long latency stretch reflexes in the second.6 We were not really surprised at the results of Hanajima et al as we do share their opinion that patients with Huntington’s disease may be characterised by large individual differences in the involvement of motor cortical areas. Actually, three patients in our study showed an amount of intracortical inhibition within the confidence limits of the control population. We also think that the impairment of intracortical inhibition is likely to develop during the progression as we did not find any change in four patients, two of them already reported,7 with positive DNA testing but completely asymptomatic.

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

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

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The authors reply:

We were very grateful for the response of Abbuzzese et al to our paper. We completely agree with their opinions.

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

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

We also consider that methodological differences are very important in paired magnetic stimulation. The results strongly depend on the intensities of both a conditioning and a test stimulus. Especially, the intensity of the conditioning stimulus is critical. We have no difficulty in showing normal inhibition, but have much difficulty in showing reduced or absent inhibition because of such marked dependence of the results on the intensities of stimuli. Therefore, we used an intensity of the conditioning stimulus before we confirmed inhibition in studies of patients.3 We used an intensity of 5% less than the active threshold as a conditioning stimulus, a facilitatory effect must often superimpose on the intracortical inhibition. This makes the interpretation difficult. Was the intensity of 80% of the resting threshold below the active threshold in their patients? In our experience, 80% of the resting threshold was sometimes above the active threshold. These factors must be considered in interpreting the results of paired magnetic stimulation.

Such a methodological problem is inherent in human studies because we have no direct way of detecting the threshold of the motor cortex. Our two results must be true. We may have two completely different interpretations of these results. (1) The intracortical inhibition is normal in Huntington’s disease. Abbuzzese et al showed the reduced inhibition because they used a high intensity conditioning stimulus with which the degree of the
Critical closing pressure: a valid concept?

Czosnyka et al recently published a study investigating the clinical significance of critical closing pressure (CCP) estimates in patients with head injury. They propose that the CCP should be involved in the concept of cerebral artery during strong hypocapnea). In conclusion, the authors suggest that CCP is a useful indicator of the physiological state of the cerebral vasculature.

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risks. How risky—can we see from Diether’s let-
ter. Cerebrovascular resistance certainly never
increases to infinity, only after death.

We fully agree with the considerations regarding
equations (6) and (7). CCP can be understood as a combination of ABP and ICP with coefficients describing properties of the
cerebrovascular bed. Whether it simplifies our
knowledge—we personally find it doubtful.

Finally, we are truly obliged to Diether for an
opportunity to have this interesting discus-
sion.

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

Reduction in the neuronal activity of the sub-
thalamic nucleus leading to diminished exci-
tation of the globus pallidum internum is associ-
ated with chorea-ballism in monkeys.1 Levodopa
induced dyskinesias are currently thought to share a similar pathophysiology2 but recent findings also suggest that abnor-
mal patterns of neuronal firing in the sub-
thalamic nucleus3 are in keeping with such a general
principle, but the threshold to induce dyskinesias
in the parkinsonian state is higher than in intact animals.4 The case recently described by Figueiras-Mendez et al5 is extremely interesting as it seems that func-
tional inhibition of the subthalamic nucleus by high frequency stimulation blocks levodopa induced dyskinesias. This is clearly at odds with the current pathophysiological model of the basal ganglia.6 Thus, the finding of Figueiras-Mendez et al rises the intrigu-
ing possibility that dyskinesias depend or are mediat-
ed by neuronal firing in a given region of the subthalamic nucleus, which was blocked by high frequency stimulation.

Measurement ofafferent synaptic activity by the technique of 2-deoxyglucose (2-DG) uptake showed an increment in the sub-
thalamic nuclei in the origin of levodopa induced dyskinesias, there is a cru-
ial issue to resolve—namely, the location of the tip of the stimulation electrodes.

There are several points leading us to question the actual site of action of the elec-
trode: (1) Stimulation of the subthalamic nucleus in Parkinson’s disease has been asso-
ciated with the production of dyskinesias only relieved by reduction in levodopa intake.6 Moreover, Benabid et al who pioneered this technique, consider the induction of dyskinesias by high frequency stimulation of the sub-
thalamic nucleus as a good indicator of a very positive response.7 When delivering to the
thalamus from the globus pallidum internum are placed dorsocaudally to the subthalamic nucleus and could be blocked by high frequency stimulation. (2) When the record-
ing electrode tip is placed ventromedially caudally to the subthalamic nucleus in sagittal planes 11 mm or less, neuronal activity is characterised by action potentials of large amplitudes (0.5–1 nV) with low background activity, tonically firing neurons, and absent sensori-

motor responses (“driving”). All these charac-

teristics seem to be present in the patient discussed here. Neuronal activity in the sensorimotor region of the subthalamic nucleus is different from the above but on occasions the distinction may not be easy.

Accordingly, it is very important to docu-
mement in more detail the findings in the case of Figueiras-Mendez et al. Ideally we would like to see the trajectory and length of the differ-
ent recording tracks, the effects of micros-
timulation, and the postsurgery MRI with measurements of the tip of the electrodes. If, as assumed, the subthalamic nucleus was indeed correctly targeted in this
patient, the pathophysiology of the basal gan-
glia will need to be revisited.

2 Grossman AR. A hypothesis on the pathophysi-
ological mechanism producing levodopa or dopamine agonist-induced dyskinesia in Par-
4 Bergman H, Wichmann T, DeLong MR. The cortical-subthalamic nucleus con-
nection is somatotopically segregated, so that fibres from the supplementary motor area project to the most medial portion and fibres from the primary and premotor areas termi-
minate in the lateral region of the subthalamic nucleus. All this heterogeneity may have pathophysiologic relevance, one aspect of which could be the findings in the patient reported by Figueiras-Mendez et al. However, before the findings of this case may be used to sustain a new hypothesis on the role of the subthalamic nucleus in the origin of levodopa induced dyskinesias, there is a cru-
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low background activity found in our recordings is only due to the better signal-to-noise ratio of the electrodes used. “Good recording electrodes” depend on many variables such as tip size, tip profile, insulation material, impedance, manufacture, etc. The signal-to-noise ratio of the cells in question has the same ratio as the subthalamic nucleus cell shown by Hutchinson et al.1

(b) In our report, cells discharged tonically, but also other cells fired phasically, well differentiated by a profuse burst activity and identified by statistical means (autocorrelation and interval histograms).

(c) Motor responses and tremorgenic cells in line with the above mentioned criteria were found along the trajectory of the electrode. Unfortunately, this point was not mentioned in the paper. It would surely have changed the opinion of Obeso et al.

The tremor-free patient, a total of eight neurons were recognised as belonging to the subthalamic nucleus in the right hemisphere, with a mean frequency of 74 Hz (range 38–109 Hz). Four of them responded to passive and/or voluntary movements and one was considered tremorgenic. The stimulating electrode was placed in laterality 11. One track was performed. In the left hemisphere, two tracks were performed. One track was stimulated by the poor responding activity of the cells recorded. In the other track, nine neurons were recorded in the subthalamic nucleus (always following the above mentioned criteria) with a mean of 69 Hz (range 17–98 Hz). Five cells responded to passive and/or voluntary movements. One of them was also positive to tremor. The stimulating electrode was placed in laterality 12. The effective stimulating electrode is always tested in the surgery before cementing it and, only when the symptoms are considered of unquestionable benefit it is left in the chosen place. The final position of the electrodes, assessed by ventriculography, was as follows: (a) posteroanterior: 1.5 mm behind the mean point of intercommisural line, (b) horizontal: 6.5–6.5 mm below the intercommisural line, and (c) lateral: 12 mm for the right hemisphere, and 11.5 mm for the left hemisphere.

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Nitric oxide in acute ischaemic stroke

The pivotal role of nitric oxide (NO) in cerebral ischaemia has been elegantly highlighted in the recent editorial by O’Mahony and Kendall.1 Although studies of neuroprotective agents have been largely disappointing, pharmacological manipulation of NO may represent a novel means of protecting the brain from ischaemic insult. One area not discussed in the recent nerve growth factor and neuroprotective effect of 3-hydroxy-3-methylglutaryl coenzyme A reductase inhibitors or “statins” in cerebral ischaemia. Preliminary studies have shown that statins modulate brain nitric oxide synthase (NOS) activity in a neuroprotective manner. Data from a murine model of ischaemic stroke demonstrate that prophylactic statin therapy reduces infarct size by about 30%, and improves neurological outcome in normocholesterolaemic animals.2 In this investigation, statin therapy directly up regulated endothelial NOS in the brain without altering expression of neuronal NOS. Recent findings also suggest that statin therapy influences the activity of inducible NOS. Lovastatin has been shown to inhibit cytokine mediated upregulation of inducible NOS and production of NO in rat astrocytes and macrophages, and this inhibition may represent a promising approach in suppressing inflammatory responses that accompany ischaemia. Most interestingly, these preliminary findings suggest that statin therapy may modulate the cytokine and neuroprotective faces of brain NO in a synergistically neuroprotective manner. These and other vascular effects of statins in cerebral ischaemia are potentially of great importance in human neuroprotection and ongoing studies such as the The Prospective Study of Pravastatin in the Elderly at Risk (PROSPER) study3 will help clarify their role in human cerebrovascular disease.

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O’Mahony replies:

The comments of Vaughan and Delanty draw attention to the evidence that statin therapy up regulates the action of NO without affecting neuronal NOS. Their contention is that statin therapy may be neuroprotective. Statins may indeed prevent strokes and reduce infarct size when given as prophylactic therapy in at risk persons. However, our editorial article was not intended to discuss the wide variety of pharmacological agents that may have favourable effects on endothelial NOS as stroke preventive therapy. Rather, it is focused on the possible ways of inhibiting neuronal NOS and inducible NOS mediated nitric oxide release after the event of acute stroke. At present, there is no information indicating that acute administration of statins in animal models of ischaemic stroke is neuroprotective. Their point about statins and endothelial NOS is interesting, but not relevant to neuroprotective therapy in acute stroke.

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BOOK REVIEWS


That neuroimmunology has come of age is demonstrated by the profusion of volumes published on the subject in recent years. This volume focuses on the central nervous system, and aims to satisfy the curiosity of both the effective clinician faced with a diagnostic conundrum and the experimental immunologist inquiring into the clinical relevance of his findings. At first sight it seems improbable that both of these goals might be achieved in one volume; this book however, succeeds admirably in what it sets out to do, as much as a result of its literary style as its content.

The intrusive authorial voice fell into disfavour in literary circles around the turn of the century because it was thought that calling attention to the act of narrating might detract from realistic illusion, so reducing the emotional intensity of what was being represented. It is a device much favoured by postmodern writers, who expose the nuts and bolts of their fictional constructs. The intrusive medical author never dropped out of fashion, although in these days of evidence based prejudice, authorial omniscience might be considered suspect. The authors of this volume are intrusive in a guiding conversational manner that makes this book by far the most readable of the neuroimmunological texts.

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

The book continues with chapters on para-neoplastic disorders of the CNS, stiff man syndrome, neurological complications of...

Organ transplantation, once medical exotica, is now almost routine. In the United Kingdom each year are performed cadaveric organ transplants of about 1800 kidneys (in addition to 160 live kidney donors), 700 livers, and 450 heart/lungs (UK Transplant Support Services). The operative and basic surgical techniques were established at the beginning of the century in canine models. Transplantation of these experiments to humans awaited safe and effective immunosuppression. Until the 1960s, the only forms of immunosuppression were radiation (total body or total lymphoid) and non-selective chemical reagents (benzene and toluene). Then the antiproliferative drug 6-mercaptopurine (6-MP) was introduced, shortly followed by a derivative, azathioprine, with improved oral bioavailability. Combined with corticosteroids, these allowed the first human solid organ transplants to be performed: in 1963 the first lung transplant in Mississippi and liver transplant in Colorado. Then in 1967 Christian Barnard captured the world’s imagination with the first heart transplant. His technique has been modified slightly since, and the increasing success of organ transplantation rests mainly on improved immunosuppression with drugs that selectively suppress lymphocytes by inhibiting lymphokine generation (cyclosporin A, tacrolimus), signal transduction (sirolimus, everolimus), or differentiation (15-deoxyspergualin) pathways. As a result, over the last 10 years in the United Kingdom, the 1 year survival of grafts has improved from 80% to 90% (kidney), 55% to 75% (liver), and 70% to 90% (heart/lung).

Wijdicks estimates that 10% of transplant patients may have a significant neurological complication. The typical transplant patient is immunocompromised, and the neurotoxicity of immunosuppressive drugs, seizures, and failure to awaken. Yet this is the first text devoted to the neurological aspects of organ transplantation. It is therefore a timely subject and an important contribution to the excellent Blue Books Of Practical Neurology series. Twenty authors contribute (one Dutch, one Swiss, the rest American) to four chapters on the transplant procedures themselves followed by 10 chapters on neurological complications of transplantation including failure to awaken, and psychiatric, neuromuscular and demyelinating complications. Especially useful to the neurologist without much experience of transplantation are the comprehensive chapters on immunosuppressive drugs and the opportunistic infections associated with them (most commonly Listeria monocytogenes, Aspergillus fumigatus, and Cryptococcus neoformans). The peripheral nerve and plexus injuries associated with transplantation are painstakingly described; astonishingly a significant ulnar neuropathy occurs in up to 40% of kidney transplant patients. The Cincinnati Transplant Tumour Registry has recorded information on 10 813 cancers arising de novo in organ allograft recipients worldwide and here are presented the data in the 300 of these with CNS involvement. This is one for the shelves of any neurologist involved in organ transplantation.

CLARE GALTON


As Alzheimer’s disease becomes of increasing importance to society, basic science research in this field needs to provide the building blocks for both therapeutic interventions and accurate diagnosis. This publication is a collection of papers presented at an international Alzheimer’s disease research meeting in Leipzig in 1997. This conference aimed to combine both clinical and basic science disciplines and this is reflected in the papers selected for this book. There are 31 papers included, covering topics from early symptomatology and cognitive features to immunobiology and theoretical neuronal treatment strategies. The contributors to this book are some of the most authoritative in their field, predominantly based in Europe. Covering all aspects of Alzheimer’s disease research from the correct diagnosis to basic science approaches of treatment is ambitious but the 124 pages are divided into five sections covering the historical concepts of vascular and Alzheimer’s dementias, the arguments for a pure vascular dementia, the role of Alzheimer’s disease in the genesis of dementia after stroke, the contribution of white matter changes on neuroimaging to dementia, and finally a short section examining practical questions such as the management of stroke in patients with dementia. Although common conditions, their own right, stroke and Alzheimer’s disease do seem to cross paths more often than would be expected by chance alone, and more often than can be explained by the presence of uncontrolled thrombopathy and recurrent lobar haemorrhages. Perhaps common genetic factors are responsible and here the ApoE alleles are discussed. The comprehensive section on deep white matter lesions seeks to explain the connection further—and convinces the reader that there is still a lot which is not well understood. It is in this section particularly that illustrations are greatly missed. Brief mention is made of other conditions which may produce white matter changes and dementia such as CADASIL, cerebral lupus, and the primary antiphospholipid syndrome.

Some typographical errors and mistranslations detract a little further from a book which seems unlikely to appeal to most neurologists, although it will no doubt be a source of reference to those working in the field of cognitive disorders, particularly vascular dementias.

PETER MARTIN


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

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

J Neurol Neurosurg Psychiatry 2000;68:100–126
Deliver effective care as well as act as a conceptual bridge between the different disciplines. One of the great pleasures of being a doctor has always been listening to patient's stories, but the editors of this book fear that this essential art can be overtaken by dull scientific pragmatism. But in the most outstanding chapters, writes a lucid and well reasoned account of the need to search for and maintain narrative meaning in treating psychosis. This allows the examining effect to both patients and professionals of identifying individuals by their illness as in schizophrenia. Every psychiatric library should buy this book for this paper alone, which should be required reading for all psychiatric trainees.

The rest of this book is of variable quality. There is a rather prosaic essay on gender issues, and there is repetition in various chapters concerning attachment theory, a useful issue, and there is repetition in various chapters covering all aspects of the assessment and management of anorexia nervosa and chronic fatigue are followed by a thorough review of the pharmacological management of substance misuse. Then come two weak chapters on behavioural disturbances in old age and the violent patient in the community. This last chapter will be of particular interest to community psychiatrists. It is a pity that I would recommend because some aspects of the practical management of violence are missing—for example, a documented risk-benefit analysis, good failsafe communication, or deciding when to detain. One of the last chapters is a very good account of the management of hyperactivity in childhood, with good practical advice on the use of methylphenidate.

Apart from the chapters on chronic fatigue and the treatment of tardive dyskinesia there is little in this book which is of immediate interest to neurologists. However general psychiatrists wishing to improve their prescribing skills will find this book useful.

SIMON FLEMINGER

The Maudsley Prescribing Guidelines are produced each year for a local readership, but this, the fifth edition, is the first to go public. The authors and principal contributors, a mixture of pharmacists and psychiatrists with an interest and background in clinical psychopharmacology, are to be complimented on producing a guide of manageable size and ready accessibility.

The book is divided into sections dealing with the treatment of broad groups of clinical disorders—for example, psychosis—special patient populations—for example, elderly people, with further sections on the management of emergencies and the adverse effects of psychotropic drugs. Much of the information is laid out in tabular form. It could become an indispensable resource for a busy on call senior house officer (the dimensions would fit comfortably into the pocket of a clinical white coat, were they still to be worn) but more senior clinicians will find plenty of use for it in the clinic. It does not aim at great erudition, but provides a useful list of references.

There are a few cavils. The section on treatment of anxiety is skimpy (one and a half pages) compared with say the treatment of affective illness (22 pages) or schizophrenia (16 pages). The brevity is only partly explained by the undeveloped state of that particular area of psychopharmacology. Sections on combinations of different drugs and indications for lumbar puncture and indications for EEG seem to have been displaced from some other primer for busy junior doctors. There is no index.

These quibbles apart, prescribing guidelines can be wholeheartedly recommended.

BRIAN TOONE

**Women and Epilepsy**

BY TIM BETTS AND PAM CRAWFORD.


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

Moving on from the general to the particular, the text, although expansive in parts, is laid out in tabular form. It could become an invaluable resource for a busy on call senior house officer (the dimensions would fit comfortably into the pocket of a clinical white coat, were they still to be worn) but more senior clinicians will find plenty of use for it in the clinic. It does not aim at great erudition, but provides a useful list of references.

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**Childhood Epilepsies and Brain Development**

Edited by ASTRID NIHLIG, JACQUES MOTTET, SOLOMON I. MOSHE, and PERERINE FLOCUNE.


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

The book is essentially a collection of monographs of heterogeneous content and style and the result, perhaps not surprisingly, is that some of the component parts are better than the sum. The clinically orientated section will clearly be of particular interest to those who treat children and their families. The chapters on infantile spasms and Lennox-Gastaut syndrome are informative and provide some new but speculative insights into the pathogenesis of spasms. However, it was surprising that severe myoclonic epilepsy of infancy did not merit a specific chapter in view of the unique electroclinical evolution and natural history of this syndrome. The crucial issue of the cognitive and behavioural sequelae of early and frequent seizures on the immature brain, which is probably of most concern to both clinicians and families, is succinctly addressed in two chapters—although a clear and consistent relation remains to be established.

The chapters covering basic neurophysiology, neuroanatomy, and neuropathology, are erudite and fascinating but at times are barely comprehensible. Further work is needed, including answering the fundamental question—why does the first seizure occur—before the clinician and basic scientist are able to talk the same language—for the benefit of the patient with epilepsy.

The concept of Childhood Epilepsies and Brain Development is innovative and commendable as the authors of many of the monographs are interesting and informative, the overall impression is that the individual parts (the chapters) are better than the whole (the book). The lack of an index is a strange omission, perhaps indicating a prolonged editorial atypical absence, and although this militates against it becoming a well-thumbed reference text, the book is an erudite addition to the mossy fibre-like sprouting of the epileptological literature.

RICHARD E APPLETON

**Difficult Clinical Problems in Psychiatry**

Edited by MALCOLM LADER and DONALD KLINN.


Difficult clinical problems in psychiatry come in many forms. Diagnosis often causes difficulty, particularly in cases which demand some assessment of the role of physical illness in symptom formation. Perhaps for most psychiatrists practising in community settings risk assessment comes high on their list of concerns.

Unsurprisingly, given the psychopharmacological expertise of the editors, this book is particularly interested in treatment resistance. The first 6 chapters give excellent reviews of the management of clinically relevant topics—for example, refractory schizophrenia or the difficult panic patient. The emphasis is very much on pharmacological management.

The second half of the book is more of a mixed bag, both in terms of the areas covered and the quality of the chapters. Two excellent chapters covering all aspects of the assessment and management of anorexia nervosa and chronic fatigue are followed by a thorough review of the pharmacological management of substance misuse. Then come two weak chapters on behavioural disturbances in old age and the violent patient in the community. This last chapter will be of particular interest to community psychiatrists. It is a pity that I would recommend because some aspects of the practical management of violence are missing—for example, a documented risk-benefit analysis, good failsafe communication, or deciding when to detain. One of the last chapters is a very good account of the management of hyperactivity in childhood, with good practical advice on the use of methylphenidate.

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SIMON FLEMINGER

**The Bethlehem and Maudsley NHS Trust Prescribing Guidelines 1999**

Edited by DAVID TAYLOR, DENISE MCCONNELL, HARRY MCCONNELL, KATHRYN AIEL, and ROBERT KERWIN.


The Maudsley prescribing guidelines are produced each year for a local readership, but this, the fifth edition, is the first to go public. The authors and principal contributors, a mixture of pharmacists and psychiatrists with an interest and background in clinical psychopharmacology, are to be complimented on producing a guide of manageable size and ready accessibility.

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