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Superficial siderosis following posterior fossa exploration

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Introduction: Superficial siderosis is a very rare neurodegenerative disorder characterised by deposition of haemosiderin in several areas of the nervous system. Early identification of this condition will obviate the need for further, extensive investigation of a patient's symptoms. We present the case of a 70 year old lady who presented with deafness and falls. A neurological examination revealed bilateral upper motor neuron and cerebellar signs, as well as right sided sensorineural deafness. Magnetic resonance imaging of the brain revealed linear hypointensities in the brainstem and cerebellum. Features on magnetic resonance imaging were pathognomonic of superficial siderosis. Further questioning elicited a history of posterior fossa exploration half a century prior to her current presentation. No other causative lesions for the superficial siderosis were identified on imaging.

Conclusion: Various sources of recurrent bleeding have been implicated in the literature as a basis for haemosiderin deposition. These include dural defects, neoplasms and arteriovenous malformations. Our patient gave a history of posterior fossa exploration, suggesting the presence of a dural defect as the cause of this disorder.

Disclosure:

None

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A case of etanercept-induced lupus nephritis

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Introduction: Tumour necrosis factor (TNF) inhibitors are used successfully in the treatment of psoriatic arthritis and plaque psoriasis. However they have also been associated with the paradoxical development of other autoimmune diseases. We report the case of a gentleman who developed acute nephritis following treatment with etanercept.

Conclusion: Clinicians need to have a high index of suspicion for autoimmune diseases, including lupus nephritis, in patients undergoing therapy with anti-TNF agents.

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The origins of medical Maltese as a curriculum topic: a descriptive study

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Introduction: The number of International medical students especially from the UK has increased. These students are at a disadvantage because hospital patients may have limited English.

Methods: This descriptive study examines the critical steps taken in the evolution of Medical Maltese as a curriculum topic.

Results: A crash course of Medical Maltese for international medical students was piloted by the Faculty in 2007-08. This evolved in 2009 as a course taught only to Medical Foundation students, all of whom are Arabic speakers. In 2012, the MMSA Medical Education Officer planned Medical Maltese tutorials taught by local students for English-speaking students. This further evolved into a Degree Plus subject taught by MMSA in collaboration with the Department of Maltese. Feedback from the course was excellent, with the majority of students agreeing that course expectations were met. In 2015, Medical Maltese has become a fully fledged entrance requirement for the medical course.

Conclusion: Since 2012, english-speaking international students have been given the opportunity to become conversant with basic medical vocabulary and scientific terminology to

enhance Maltese communication skills in realistic situations in a medical setting. The important role of MMSA in this achievement cannot be underestimated.

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The effect of alcohol on the body's physiology: the good and the bad

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Introduction: The consumption of alcohol in food and drink is widespread throughout different populations and cultures. The link between alcohol and the effect on health has been studied extensively. The aim of this literature review was to shed light on the underlying biochemical and physiological mechanisms involved in bringing about such effects in various body systems.

Conclusion: Alcohol has long been associated with liver damage, the major underlying mechanisms being the production of Reactive oxygen species (ROS) and the abortion of biochemical pathways involved in their removal. The effect of alcohol on the mucociliary apparatus of the airways varies according to the amount and the period of alcohol exposure. While chronic alcohol consumption can, in fact, predispose to chest infections by decreasing the beating frequency of cilia, a small and acute dose of alcohol can actually bring the reverse effect, that is, an increased ciliary beating frequency. This is thought to occur via a nitric oxide and protein kinase – dependant biochemical pathway. Alcohol acts as a double-edged sword where cardiovascular health is concerned. Evidence shows that light-to-moderate alcohol consumption is actually associated with better health than no consumption. A variety of biochemical processes are involved - resulting in increased HDL cholesterol production, increased insulin sensitivity as well as other mechanisms involving nitric oxide. Beyond a certain threshold however the cardiovascular benefits associated with alcohol consumption are over-ridden by associated adverse effects.

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Incidence and prevalence of Huntington's disease in Malta: a methodological discussion

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Introduction: Huntington's disease (HD) is an autosomal dominant neurodegenerative condition with an average prevalence of between 4 and 8 per 100,000. Limited research in Malta indicates a higher prevalence. However, no formal epidemiological study has ever been done.

Methods: The primary limitation at present is the lack of an adequate patient database. Various methodologies to determine incidence and prevalence are discussed. Different approaches include: making HD a notifiable condition, the snowball sampling technique and the cross-sectional approach. Prospective molecular genetic analysis of cord blood for the CAG repeat size in the Huntingtin gene may be used to give an estimate of the incidence of HD in Malta. The size of the CAG repeats in the Huntingtin gene may be studied and the mean size compared to that in other European countries in order to identify whether Malta has a higher norm for CAG repeats. This could be combined with haplotyping techniques which could confirm the presence of a founder effect.

Conclusion: Estimation of the frequency of HD in Malta will require the use of multiple epidemiological and molecular genetic techniques. The advantages and limitations of each, together with a synergistic combination of techniques, will be presented in the light of various ethical and humanistic problems that will arise and which have to be overcome for such a study to be successful.