Letters to the Editor

Rupture of the Female Urethra

Sir

I was interested in Zein and Sidani's Case Report of rupture of the urethra in a 12-year-old girl, in the January edition of the Saudi Medical Journal (1992: 13: 63–64). Certainly, I would confirm their experience and that of others as regards the rarity of this injury.

In my department in Wellington, New Zealand there are two recorded cases which occurred in the last 25 years, one of which came under my care in 1975. She was a 3-year-old child who was accidentally run over when her father unknowingly backed his truck over her. She sustained a fractured pelvis along with complete avulsion of the urethra and transection of the vagina. The vagina was repaired forthwith by simple suture, while urethral continuity was re-established with tubed split skin splinted with a Foley Catheter. Her postoperative recovery was without event. She was followed regularly thereafter with 3-monthly urethral calibrations for a year, after which the intervals were lengthened. Urinary control was uncertain for 3 years but rectified itself only to recur again for 18 months some 4 years later. It was mainly stress-related but it settled.

She is now aged 17 years and when last seen 2 years ago she had a good urinary stream, virtually normal control, although violent physical exercise was occasionally associated with dampness. Her vagina is completely normal in length and distensibility with no visible signs of an earlier transection.

The other patient was a young girl also involved in road trauma and treated by primary repair. Unfortunately her family left the district and she was lost to follow-up.

My feeling, based as it is on the experience of one patient only, is that approximation of the ends of the ruptured urethra using the simplest technique possible should be the first priority. Subsequent treatment may well be necessary and will be determined by whether stricture formation and/or incontinence follows. With luck, neither may occur.

I congratulate the authors on an interesting and instructive contribution.

D. URQUHART-HAY, KSFJ FRCS FRACS
Urologist
Wellington Hospital, New Zealand and
Armed Forces Hospital, Taif, Saudi Arabia

Sir

This letter is in response to Dr Urquhart-Hay. The difference between the two cases that Dr Urquhart-Hay presented and our case is that his cases presented to him firstly and he was able to manage them primarily. However, our case presented after being operated on in a peripheral hospital. I tend to agree with Dr Urquhart-Hay that primary repair can be attempted; however, if associated bowel injury is present, a higher incidence of stricture and fistula formation might take place. I also reemphasize that this injury is a very rare entity and experience from one centre is inadequate so a collective collection of case reports of management of urethral injuries should be reported so more experience can be gained. We thank Dr Urquhart-Hay for his contribution and hope that other doctors will report their experience so we can learn more about this entity.

DR T. ZEIN
Consultant Urologist
Saudi Aramco, Surgical Services Division
Room A-422, Box 76, Dhahran Health Center
Dhahran, Saudi Arabia

Interferon-gamma Control in Relation to Infection

Sir

Since I wrote my article,1 Intracellular Survival on Microorganisms, there has been further clarification of the role of interferon-gamma in host defence. It would therefore save interested readers much trouble if I could make a few points.

Interferon-gamma (γ-IFN) can originate from CD4 T helper cells, from CD8 cytotoxic T cells or from natural killer cells.2 In particular it is now clear that the helper cells from which IFN-gamma comes are Th-1 cells, which are inflammatory or delayed hypersensitivity T cells. The alternative cell type is a Th-2 T cell that produces the cytokines II-4, II-5 or II-6 which cause B cell production of antibodies. Th-1 and Th-2 cells can now be identified in man3 as well as in the mouse.

In leishmaniasis a good Th-1 cell response with production of cytokines II-2 and IFN-gamma will lead to a healing response in which activated macrophages play an offensive role. Conversely in situations in which Th-2 cells predominate, antibody formation will be adequate but cell-mediated immunity (CMI) will be defective. As I discussed before,4 one may have to give interferon-gamma in order to boost the (CMI).

Also in schistosomiasis the early response is usually a Th-2 cell response, since it is promoted by antigens from the eggs.4 Only if there has been previous vaccination (which boosts IFN-gamma output), or much later in the illness, do Th-1 cells start to predominate and mount an eradicative delayed hypersensitivity reaction.

It is now established that it is the release of interleukin 105 by Th-2 cells that leads to the down-regulation of the Th-1 response. So, for example, it has been shown that II-10 blocks the ability of IFN-gamma to inhibit the intracellular replication of Tryp. cruzi in mouse peritoneal macrophages.6 Furthermore interleukin 4 from the Th-2 cells suppresses production of IFN-gamma,7 and transforming growth factor TGFbeta8 de-activates macrophage responses.

All this is to say that there are fine controls over all the several cells in the immune system. Normally 'macrophage activating factors' such as IFN-gamma, tumour necrosis factor alpha or granulocyte-macrophage colony stimulating factor (GM-CSF) should so boost macrophage reactivities that they are able to kill intracellular organisms. Yet unfortunately the microorganisms have often learned how to subvert the immune defence system.

E. NIGEL WARDLE MD
21 Common Road, North Leigh
Nr Oxford OX8 6RD, UK
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References
Concerning the second point—indeed we were sitting that day in the operating room discussing the different options of removing the foreign body and one of these options was to use the bladder biopsy and fluoroscopy.

As to the third point—I was the surgeon who bronchoscopied the child, identified the segmental bronchus, then introduced the forceps through the bronchoscope to come in contact with the foreign body. As my hands were busy with the bronchoscope, the direction of the forceps and the child’s head, at the other end of the forceps; at the grip of the forceps, Dr Rifai was trying to grasp the foreign body. Once it happened, I removed the bronchoscope including the forceps and the foreign body. So it was team work and a very obvious action for the sake of the patient as stated by Dr Rifai.

I never ignored the help and advice of Dr Rifai as my acquaintance indicates. It was of less interest to the reader to know these details about the case. The aim was to present to the reader this new technique in order to help patients and save them major surgery.

PROFESSOR ABDULAZIZ ASHOOR
Department of ORL, King Faisal University
PO Box 2114, Dammam 31451, Saudi Arabia
Saudi Medical Journal 1993; 14(1): 84

[This correspondence is now closed. Editor]

Prevalence of Psychiatric Disorder in an Academic Primary Care Department in Riyadh

Sir

The article by Al-Fares et al.1 reported the prevalence of psychiatric disorders in an academic primary care centre. The prevalence of psychiatric disorders was calculated using two methods. In the first method, the GP’s assessment was compared with that of the psychiatrist while in the second, comparison was conducted between GHQ and psychiatrist. The authors found a close estimate of psychiatric disorders and concluded that the repeatability of the results of both methods was reassuring and may indicate their reliability.

One important issue that was not addressed in the article was the statistical significance of the reliability either between psychiatrist and GP or between psychiatrist and GHQ. The authors reported only percentage of agreement and failed to report the level of significance corresponding to such percentage of agreement.

Kappa statistic is a measure of reproducibility that tests whether the observed concordance rates is only due to chance. It can be estimated using the following formula

\[ \kappa = \frac{P_o - P_e}{1 - P_e} \]

where \( P_o \) and \( P_e \) are the observed and expected probability of concordance between the two assessment methods.2 Landis & Koch provided the following guidelines for the evaluation of kappa:

\[ x > 0.75 \text{ denotes excellent reproducibility.} \]
\[ 0.4 \leq x \leq 0.75 \text{ denotes good reproducibility.} \]
\[ 0 \leq x < 0.4 \text{ denotes marginal reproducibility.} \]

Data in Tables 2 and 3 in Al-Fares et al. can be used to estimate whether reproducibility is not due to chance. The kappa statistic for agreement between assessment of primary care physician and psychiatrist is 0.29 (\( P_o = 0.6579 \) and \( P_e = 0.5166 \)) and is 0.26 (\( P_o = 0.6316 \) and \( P_e = 0.5014 \)) for agreement between CHO-28 score and psychiatrist, which indicates that the reproducibility, even with similar estimates of psychiatric


An Unusual Technique for the Removal of Peripheral Retained Foreign Body from a Paediatric Bronchial Tree

Sir

I was very pleased to read the case report of Professor A. A. Ashoor published in Saudi Med J 1991; 12(5): 424–426, where he presented an unusual technique for the removal of peripheral retained foreign body from a paediatric bronchial tree. I am very grateful to Professor Ashoor’s acknowledgement regarding my ‘advice and assistance’.

However, I have, for the sake of truth, to make the following comments:

1. The case was done at the Security Forces Hospital when Dr Ashoor was on special assignment and it was referred to Security Forces Hospital from the King Faisal University Hospital in Al-Khobar.

2. As Dr Ashoor will remember, it was I who introduced the idea of utilizing the bladder biopsy forceps after removing the lens from the paediatric bronchoscope and relying on fluoroscopy to grasp the foreign body. As a matter of fact, I had to do a small in vitro test to convince Dr Ashoor of the viability of the technique.

3. Although Dr Ashoor was the main consultant on the case, it was I, utilizing his bronchoscopy, who technically removed the foreign body and the bronchoscope in toto.

I hope this comment will clear the facts and shows how different specialities with same endoscopic experience can work together to achieve the patient’s well being and avoid major surgical intervention.

GHASSAN M. RIFAI MD FICS
Chief of Urology Service
Security Forces Hospital PO Box 3643
Riyadh 11481, Saudi Arabia
Saudi Medical Journal 1993; 14(1): 84

Sir

The first point made by Dr Rifai is true; the procedure was done at the Security Hospital when I was on special assignment.