

## Correspondence

### Lateral subluxation of atlanto-axial joint

Sir,

In their useful article on lateral subluxation of the atlanto-axial joint in rheumatoid arthritis Burry *et al.* (1978) note that it is difficult to explain, in simple neuroanatomical terms, the occurrence of orbital pain in patients with rheumatoid arthritis of the upper cervical spine (as well as in persons with degenerative joint disease of the same area).

I wish to suggest that not only the orbital pain, but also the pain felt in the occiput and behind the ear, can be explained by mechanisms other than direct irritation of nerve roots. Disease of joints is almost invariably accompanied by pain syndromes of associated muscles, with trigger points and referred pain. Muscles in the vicinity of the upper cervical spine, which refer pain to the orbit, include the occipitalis, splenius capitis and cervicis, and sternocleidomastoid. The semispinalis cervicis and splenius capitis refer pain to the occiput, and the sternocleidomastoid to the postauricular area. (Cyriax, 1938; Kelly, 1942; Travell, 1967; also Simons and Travell, unpublished observations). Many who have studied pain referred from muscle believe that it is a reflex phenomenon in which the central and possibly the autonomic nervous systems are involved (Kelly, 1945; Travell, 1949).

Treatment of this pain by injection of trigger points with local anaesthetic (as was done in case 1 of Burry *et al.*) often is helpful. I have observed it to relieve 'intractable' nuchal and head pain when a full array of measures directed at the spine itself had failed. Such an approach merits consideration in all patients with this problem.

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#### References

- Burry, H. C., Tweed, J. M., Robinson, R. G., and Howes, R. (1978). Lateral subluxation of the atlanto-axial joint in rheumatoid arthritis. *Annals of the Rheumatic Diseases*, **37**, 525-528.
- Cyriax, J. (1938). Rheumatic headache. *British Medical Journal*, **2**, 1367-1368.
- Kelly, M. (1942). Headaches, traumatic and rheumatic: the cervical somatic lesion. *Medical Journal of Australia*, **2**, 479-483.
- Kelly, M. (1945). The nature of fibrositis. I. The myalgic lesion and its secondary effects: a reflex theory. *Annals of the Rheumatic Diseases*, **5**, 1-7.
- Travell, J. (1949). Basis for the multiple uses of local block of somatic trigger areas (procaine infiltration and ethyl chloride spray). *Mississippi Valley Medical Journal*, **71**, 13-21, 12.
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### Change in style of references

In accordance with the Vancouver agreement many medical journals are to standardise the instructions they issue to authors on the preparation of articles. References will be cited by the numerical system already familiar in many journals, including the *British Medical Journal*. A paper (or book) cited in the text is referred to there by a superscript number. In the list of references the papers (or books) appear in the numerical order in which they are first cited in the text, not in alphabetical order by authors' names. For convenience in preparing the typescript the reference number may be typed between parentheses on the line, not superscript. The titles of journals will be abbreviated in accordance with the style of *Index Medicus*. In the typescript they should either be abbreviated in that style or given in full. This journal

will change to the numerical system from the first issue of 1980. *Authors submitting papers are asked to adopt it now in order to facilitate editing.* Three examples follow:

<sup>1</sup>Green A B, Brown C D, Grey E F. A new method of measuring the blood glucose. *Ann Rheum Dis* 1980; **64**: 27-32.

<sup>2</sup>Green A B, Brown C D. *Textbook of Medicine*. London: Silver Books, 1980.

<sup>3</sup>Grey E F. Diseases of the pancreas. In: Green A B, Brown C D, eds. *Textbook of Medicine*. London: Silver Books, 1980; 349-362.

Copies of the Vancouver agreement (50p, post free) are obtainable from the Publishing Manager, British Medical Journal, BMA House, Tavistock Square, London WC1H 9JR.

## Notes

### Volvo awards for low back pain research

To encourage research in low back pain the Volvo Company of Göteborg, Sweden, has sponsored three prizes of US\$3000 each. Awards will be made competitively on the basis of scientific merit in the following three areas: clinical studies; bioengineering studies; studies in other basic science areas. Papers submitted for the contest must contain original material that has not been published previously. Multiple authorship is acceptable. The manuscripts should be full-length, in a form suitable for submission to a scientific journal. Five copies of each paper submitted should be received by 1 January 1980. One of the authors should be prepared to come to New Orleans, USA, at the time of the meeting of the International Society for the Study of the Lumbar Spine, 24–28 May, 1980, to present the paper and to receive the prize. A board of referees will be chaired by

the undersigned and will contain members from the fields of clinical medicine, bioengineering, and biochemistry. Correspondence to Professor Alf Nachemson, Past President ISSLS, Department of Orthopaedic Surgery I. Salhgren, Hospital S-413 45 Göteborg, Sweden.

### Design of trials

A combined first annual scientific session of the society for Clinical Trials and the seventh annual symposium for co-ordinating clinical trials will be held on 6–8 May 1980 at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA. The sessions will focus on the design, organisation, management, and analyses of clinical trials. Abstracts must be *received* by 21 January 1980. For information write to Christian R. Klimt, MD, Secretary Society for Clinical Trials Inc., 600 Wyndhurst Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21280, USA.