In Focus

Spotlight on the December 14 Issue

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Tapping linked to function and structure in premanifest and symptomatic Huntington disease

Motor signs are functionally disabling features of Huntington disease. This multicenter study used a speeded and a metronome tapping task in 123 controls, 120 premanifest and 123 early symptomatic gene carriers. Tapping deficits were evident throughout manifest and premanifest stages, but more pronounced in later stages of the disease.

See p. 2150; Editorial, p. 2142

Prospective memory in patients with juvenile myoclonic epilepsy and their healthy siblings

The authors evaluated different phases of prospective memory (e. g., intention formation, intention retention, intention initiation, intention execution) in 19 patients with juvenile myoclonic epilepsy, 21 siblings, and 21 healthy controls. Their findings support the hypothesis of frontal dysfunctions being part of the epileptic syndrome and therefore genetically determined.

See p. 2161; Editorial, p. 2144

FDG-PET improves surgical outcome in negative MRI Taylor-type focal cortical dysplasias

Of 23 consecutive patients with negative 1.5-Tesla MRI, 10 exhibited subtle nonspecific abnormalities (e.g., unusual sulcus depth or gyral pattern) and the other 13 had strictly normal MRI. Coregistration of MRI with FDG-PET improves lesion identification, diagnosis, and surgical prognosis of patients with negative MRI.

See p. 2168

Bihemispheric brain stimulation facilitates motor recovery in chronic stroke patients

This trial investigated whether noninvasive modulation of regional excitability of bilateral motor cortices in combination with occupational therapy improved motor outcome in 20 chronic stroke patients. The combination of bihemispheric transcranial direct current stimulation and peripheral sensorimotor activities showed that improved motor functions in these patients outlasted the intervention period.

See p. 2176; Editorial, p. 2146

Randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled trial of hydroxyurea in spinal muscular atrophy

This randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled trial evaluated the safety and efficacy of hydroxyurea in 28 type 2 and 29 type 3 spinal muscular atrophy patients. In this trial, hydroxyurea 20 mg/kg/day was not effective for spinal muscular atrophy, and its main side effect was neutropenia.

See p. 2190

Upholding professionalism: The disciplinary process of the American Academy of Neurology

This paper discusses the Academy's disciplinary process and how it holds Academy members accountable to the ethical and professional standards developed by the Academy for its members and those served by its members.

See p. 2198

From editorialist Robert C. Griggs: "As quality measures and medical errors receive greater public scrutiny, it can be anticipated that the number of substantiated patient complaints will increase. Moreover, the unwillingness of the US Congress and President to address tort reform makes it certain that malpractice litigation will continue to thrive. It will be important for the Academy to continue to monitor and to be prepared to contend with an increasing number of complaints.

See p. 2148

NB: Be sure to check out the January 4, 2011, issue for the reprint of the first article ever published in the journal, titled:"The past, present and future of Neurology in the United States," as the Green Journal turns 60.

Podcasts can be accessed at www.neurology.org

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