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SPONTANEOUS TEMPORARY REMISSION IN PRIMARY CNS LYMPHOMA

To the Editor

In regard to the article by Rubin et al,¹ we would like to add that the diagnosis of primary CNS lymphoma appears to be much more common recently than ever in the past, in patients who are *not* infected with HIV. We have also noted temporary remission, but on careful, detailed, methodical review of patient information, these remissions correlate with some type of corticosteroid medication having been given. In one case, for example, this corticosteroid medication was given as part of an angiographic procedure and was even omitted from the medication record. It is therefore our hypothesis that routine doses of corticosteroid medication are potentially capable of inducing transient remissions. Such temporary remissions can be of serious consequence if physicians mistakenly assume that "all is well" and do not proceed to biopsy and radiation treatment. This is particularly important now, with the availability of computer-assisted stereotactic biopsy techniques minimizing morbidity.

It would be of interest to know if the clinical record of the case reported by Rubin et al, was exhaustively scrutinized for any type of corticosteroid medication given at the time of her initial evaluation.

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REPLY

We thank Drs. Buell and Hart for their comments. Although our patient did undergo angiography, at no time during her first admission did she receive any steroid medication. Careful review of the chart and questioning of the house staff verified this. Nonetheless, remission following routine doses of steroid medication given as part of an angiographic procedure is equally surprising. Either it was purely coincidental or, based on proposed mechanisms of steroid-induced remission, the level of gluco-corticoid receptor in the cytosol was extremely high.

With regard to the frequency of primary CNS lymphoma in non-HIV infected patients, our review of the literature indicates that this entity, even in the past, was only rarely seen in those immunocompromised for any reason.^{1,2,3} Of 400 cases reported, only 1% were immunocompromised.⁴ Thus primary CNS lymphoma has always been much more common in persons immunologically intact.

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