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Next Week in the Journal

OCTOBER 28, 2004

**Election 2004:
The Candidates**

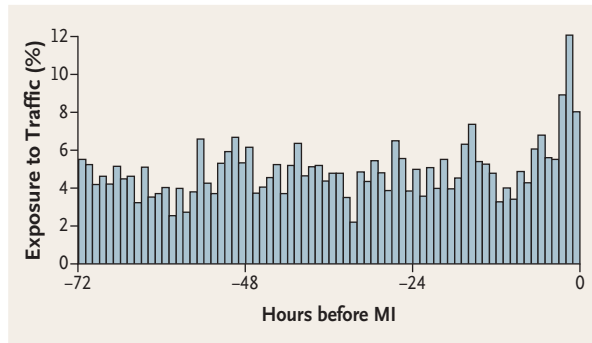


This Week in the Journal

OCTOBER 21, 2004

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Traffic and Myocardial Infarction



This study examined exposure to traffic in urban areas as a potential trigger of myocardial infarction. A significant association was found between exposure to traffic and the onset of a myocardial infarction one

hour later, whether the time spent in traffic was in a car, on a form of public transportation, or on a bicycle.

The explanation for the finding is uncertain, but it is probably related to the detrimental effects of air pollution in heavily traveled areas — although mental stress experienced in conditions of dense traffic could also have a role.

SEE P. 1721; PERSPECTIVE, P. 1716

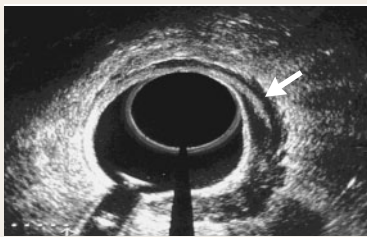
ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Preoperative versus Postoperative Chemoradiotherapy for Rectal Cancer

This randomized trial compared preoperative with postoperative chemoradiotherapy for locally advanced rectal cancer. Overall survival was similar in the two groups, but patients assigned to preoperative chemoradiotherapy had lower rates of local recurrence and fewer long-term toxic effects than patients in the postoperative group.

At five years, overall survival among patients with locally advanced rectal cancer is about 75 percent. Advances in the management of this disease can evolve from earlier diagnosis, improvements in surgical technique, and more effective chemotherapy.

SEE P. 1731; EDITORIAL, P. 1790; CME, P. 1810



Infiltrating Mass on Endorectal Ultrasonography.

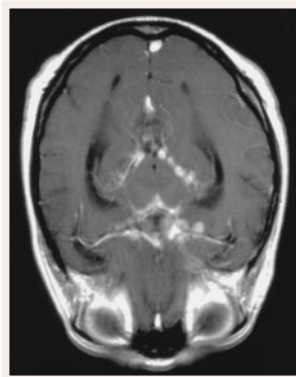
ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Dexamethasone for Patients with Tuberculous Meningitis

Even with antituberculosis therapy, tuberculous meningitis causes death or severe disability in more than half of affected adults. In this double-blind, placebo-controlled trial, conducted in Vietnam, dexamethasone treatment was associated with a reduced risk of death as compared with placebo (31.8 percent vs. 41.3 percent).

This major study establishes that adjunctive corticosteroid treatment improves survival in patients over 14 years of age who have tuberculous meningitis.

SEE P. 1741; PERSPECTIVE, P. 1719; EDITORIAL, P. 1792; CME, P. 1811

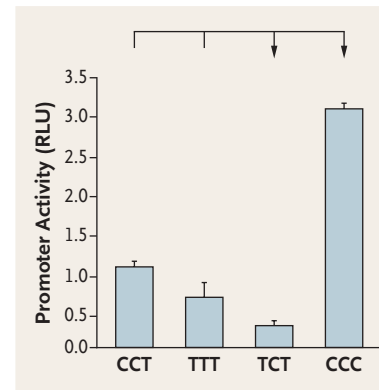


ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Role of Gene Variants in Susceptibility to Asthma

This study shows that three polymorphisms of the prostanoid prostaglandin D receptor gene (*PTGDR*) are associated with protection against asthma. Each of the polymorphisms affects the binding of a transcription factor that, in turn, influences the expression of *PTGDR*. Inheritance of the three polymorphisms that result in a low level of expression of *PTGDR* is associated with protection against asthma in European-American and African-American populations.

SEE P. 1752; EDITORIAL, P. 1794



CLINICAL PRACTICE

The Thyroid Nodule

A 42-year-old woman presents with a palpable mass on the left side of her neck. She has no neck pain and no symptoms of thyroid dysfunction. Physical examination reveals a solitary, mobile thyroid nodule, 2 cm by 3 cm, without lymphadenopathy. The patient has no family history of thyroid disease and no history of external irradiation. Which investigations should be performed? Assuming that the nodule is benign, which, if any, treatment should be recommended?

SEE P. 1764; CME, P. 1809

MECHANISMS OF DISEASE

Therapeutic Potential of RNA Interference

RNA interference (RNAi) involves the use of easily generated RNA fragments to down-regulate gene expression in a highly specific manner. Since its discovery, about seven years ago, the method has quickly evolved and is now a routine application in many molecular laboratories. Recent success in treating animal models of disease indicates that RNAi also has the potential to treat human disease.

SEE P. 1772

CASE RECORDS OF THE MASSACHUSETTS GENERAL HOSPITAL

A 68-Year-Old Man with a Large Retroperitoneal Mass

A 68-year-old man was found to have a large retroperitoneal mass on routine physical examination. Biopsy disclosed a gastrointestinal stromal tumor. After four months, the tumor had increased in size, although the patient remained asymptomatic. The discussants review recent advances in diagnosis and treatment of this type of tumor as they apply to the patient.

SEE P. 1779