

ated white patches with feathery borders, caused by differential myelination of individual axons. Myelinated retinal nerve fibers occur in 1% of the population and may mimic optic-disk swelling or papilledema; an important differentiating feature is the absence of a feathery appearance in true optic-disk swelling. The occurrence is bilateral in 17 to 20% of cases and is continuous with the disk in 81% of cases. Usually, visual acuity is normal, and no particular ophthalmologic follow-up is necessary.

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Editor's note: We received 654 responses for this medical mystery, from 61 countries. Sixty-five percent of respondents were practicing physicians, 18% were physicians in training, 10% were medical students, and 7% were other readers. Fifty-eight percent correctly diagnosed myelinated retinal nerve fibers. Other common diagnoses included



Figure 1. Myelinated Retinal Nerve Fibers.

papilledema, lipemia retinalis, glaucoma, neoplastic processes, multiple sclerosis, sarcoidosis, and a variety of infections, such as infection with cytomegalovirus, toxoplasma, or *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*. It is important not to confuse this benign finding on physical examination with optic-nerve edema.

1. Randhawa S, Lee AG. Medical mystery: cloud surrounding the optic disks. *N Engl J Med* 2008;358:69.

Review of *Thomas Eakins*

TO THE EDITOR: Greenspan's review of Amy Werbel's book, *Thomas Eakins: Art, Medicine, and Sexuality in Nineteenth-Century Philadelphia* (Oct. 25 issue),¹ contains a misstatement. In discussing the second of Eakins's "two great medical works," Greenspan refers to the subject of the painting, Dr. D. Hayes Agnew, as "a longtime professor of surgery at Jefferson Medical College." Agnew was a professor of surgery at the University of Pennsylvania and the first holder of the John Rhea Barton Professorship of Surgery. The "university amphitheater" referred to was located at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania.

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1. Greenspan RE. Review of: *Thomas Eakins: Art, Medicine, and Sexuality in Nineteenth-Century Philadelphia*. *N Engl J Med* 2007;357:1782-3.

THE AUTHOR REPLIES: Kaiser has correctly pointed out that Agnew was a professor of surgery at the University of Pennsylvania Medical College and had no academic affiliation with Jefferson Medical College. Agnew had enrolled at Jefferson College in 1833, but that institution was not related to Jefferson Medical College in Philadelphia, which later became Washington and Jefferson College.

I apologize to Kaiser and to the University of Pennsylvania, and I hope that my misstatement regarding Agnew's hospital affiliation does not detract from my favorable review of Werbel's book.

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