



paranasal sinus adjacent to the floor of the anterior or middle cranial fossa (shared bony wall fracture) was demonstrated in every case. Of the 30 patients, 2 refused surgery. In the other 28 patients surgical exploration was performed and the site of the fracture corresponded to a site of dural tear in every case. The image published in Dr Ouma's article is similar to a number of the images obtained in our series. The longest interval from the time of head injury to presentation with non-meningococcal meningitis in our series was 13 years. Our article was one of the first publications to document the value of direct coronal CT scanning in this setting.

In light of the current HIV/AIDS epidemic, patients with opportunistic intracranial infection would have to be excluded; otherwise it is my belief that every patient who presents with non-meningococcal meningitis should be investigated for a possible shared bony wall fracture by undergoing a direct coronal CT scan of the floor of the anterior and middle cranial fossae.

Don Emby

Western Deep Levels Hospital
Western Levels
2501

- 1 Ouma JR. Recurrent meningitis due to unrecognised skull fracture (Forum). *S Afr Med J* 2002; 92: 778-779.
- 2 Farrell VI, Emby DJ. Meningitis following fractures of the paranasal sinuses: Accurate, non-invasive localization of the dural defect by direct coronal computed tomography. *Surg Neurol* 1993; 37: 378-382.

Need and opportunities for training health professionals in medical genetics

To the Editor: Medical genetics is a subspecialty registrable with the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA). Subspecialty training in medical genetics can be undertaken in academic centres registered with the HPCSA.

Medical genetics has played an increasing role in health care over the last half century and the need for medical genetic services in many developing countries including South Africa has become apparent in the last decade. Serious birth defects and genetic disorders comprise a wide-ranging and complex group of conditions affecting 50 - 80 per 1 000 children in this country and they contribute significantly to infant mortality and morbidity. The role of genetics in medicine is set to increase as the impact of the Human Genome Project and future developments are brought to bear on the care and prevention of the chronic common disorders of later life such as cancer, hypertension, stroke, asthma and mental disorders.

Currently, South Africa boasts 13 registrable clinical geneticists and fewer genetic counsellors. These personnel are

far too few to bring a reasonable service to the population of this country. Currently, three departments of human genetics in South Africa, at the Universities of Cape Town, Free State and the Witwatersrand, are registered with the HPCSA to provide sub-specialty training for clinicians in medical genetics. Unfortunately, because of financial constraints and competing priorities, posts available to undertake such training are limited.

The Department of Human Genetics of the National Health Laboratory Service (NHLS) (Central), based in Johannesburg, has academic links to the Faculty of Health Sciences, University of the Witwatersrand, and offers a 2-year training post in the subspecialty of Medical Genetics for a specialist already registered in Paediatrics, Obstetrics and Gynaecology or Internal Medicine. The Colleges of Medicine of South Africa examine appropriately trained persons for registration and a Masters degree (Medicine) can be obtained concurrently through the Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of the Witwatersrand.

The Foundation for Alcohol Related Research (FARR) is offering a bursary commensurate with the salary earned by a specialist in public service to a selected person for training in Medical Genetics. The position becomes available on 1 January 2003.

A 2-year training in Genetic Counselling (Masters in Medicine) is also available for successful applicants commencing 1 January 2003. This is a comprehensive course similar to training schedules in the USA, Australia and Europe, and is registrable in South Africa with the HPCSA. Scholarships from the NHLS and the University of the Witwatersrand are offered to successful applicants.

Applications for these fields of training can be made to: Professor Denis Viljoen, National Health Laboratory Service, PO Box 1038, Johannesburg, 2000. Tel: 011-489 9211, Fax: 011-489 9226, Email: denis@mail.saimr.wits.ac.za

Denis Viljoen

Department of Human Genetics
National Health Laboratory Service
Johannesburg

Two mutations in the MTHFR gene associated with mild hyperhomocysteinaemia

To the Editor: We read with much interest the article by Scholtz *et al.*¹ on the interethnic differences in frequencies of the C677T and A1298C mutations of the methylene tetrahydrofolate reductase (MTHFR) gene. The importance of their findings