

EARLY TENDERNESS OF MEDIAN NERVES

TO THE EDITOR:

In examining early cases of leprosy with incipient or prelepromatous macules in any part of the body, I have found that frequently the median nerves are tender, over a point just below the line joining the two epicondyles and one-third of the distance from the medial border of the forearm. The bilateral character is a special feature of the condition. Not infrequently the radial nerves are also found to be similarly tender over a point 1 to 1½ inches below the line joining the two epicondyles and one-third of the distance from the lateral border of the forearm. These nerves are found affected in this way at a time when the ulnar is neither tender nor thickened. The tenderness of the median nerves is best detected when the forearm is extended and when some pressure is exerted over the point. As these nerves are deeply placed I cannot say whether or not they are thickened when found tender.

This condition of the median nerves seems to suggest that the disease is becoming active, and that it is tending to take a serious—or lepromatous—turn. In some cases at least the tenderness is present early in the disease; thickening and tenderness of the ulnar is a later manifestation. This sign is absent in minor tuberculoid and early and advanced arrested neural cases where the lepromin test is probably positive; it is present in the incipient, prelepromatous and early lepromatous cases where the lepromin test is probably negative; it may or may not be present in the other lepromatous cases where the lepromin test is negative and where the ulnar nerve is tender and/or thickened.

This condition of bilateral tenderness of the median nerves has been observed in over 200 early cases. If my ideas on the subject are correct, then its presence or absence has a definite diagnostic and prognostic value and significance in leprosy, though an explanation for its existence cannot be offered. The views of other leprologists are solicited.

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[In connection with the foregoing communication, and also with the article by J. H. Murdock published in this issue, there is some interest in a statement encountered in a case report by J. Nicolas, J. Gaté and P. Ravault, in the transactions of the Third International Conference on Leprosy held in Strasbourg in 1923 (pp. 204-207). In describing the nerve changes found, which included enlargement of the ulnars at the elbow

and of many nerves at the level of the superficial cervical plexus, they stated:

“On trouvait dans les régions inguinales les deux nerfs cruraux gros et moniliformes. L'un de nous insiste volontiers sur cette hypertrophie du crural souvent plus nette et plus marquée que celle des autres troncs nerveux: c'est le *signe du crural* (J. Nicolas).”

Cursory search of several articles on the clinical examination of the accessible nerves has not brought to light any reference to early tenderness of the median, or any other reference to the examination of the crural. Any information on either subject which may be contributed should be of value.—EDITOR.]