MECONIUM PERITONITIS PRESENTING AS A PSEUDOCYST

Dear Editor,

This refers to the article "Meconium peritonitis presenting as a pseudocyst" (MJAFI 1995; 51: 211-12). A meconium pseudocyst follows when a perforation in the gut proximal to the atresia is not immediately sealed-off in utero and the meconium continues to enter the peritoneal cavity, which was perhaps the sequence of events in this case.

The post-mortem findings revealed "the colon along its entire length as well as the terminal ileum was cord-like

and atretic with a narrow lumen". To set the records right, "narrow lumen" and "atretic" are not synonymous. Distal to any gut atresia, the gut is commonly pencil thin with a narrow lumen. As there was evidence of narrow distal ileum and unused microcolon, this was evidently a case of distal ileal atresia and not a colonic atresia. A pseudocyst is one of the logical conclusions of an associated perforation of the distended proximal ileum in the prenatal period.

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Authors reply

Dear Editor,

We agree with the comment that "narrow lumen" and "atretic" are not synonymous. During post-mortem we found it difficult to delineate the exact atretic segment in

view of extensive adhesions with a cord-like large gut which was probably unused microcolon.

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NIGHT SHIFT INTOLERANCE IN NURSING OFFICERS - REASSESSED

Dear Editor,

The idea that night shift work may be hazardous for ones health is not new. Studies have shown that such work is associated with symptoms of sleep disturbance, persisting fatigue, behavioural changes and digestive symptoms. This cluster of symptoms has been named as shift intolerance [1-3]. In addition, increasing attention is now being paid to the consequences for others health and safety as investigators have implicated sleep deprivation in several widely publicized mishaps. In 1984, the unexpected death of a patient admitted to a New York hospital triggered an investigation which led to recommendations for changing the work schedules of residents and interns to lessen the effects of chronic sleep deprivation on medical judgement. A few studies have shown that changes in night schedules can reduce fatigue and benefit workers and employers [4].

Nursing officers in Military Hospitals also work on night shift. An earlier study established that 48.3 per cent of 60 nursing officers showed symptoms of intolerance to night shifts [5]. A study was conducted at Military Hospital Meerut from 10 July 95 to 5 August 95 to reassess the incidence of night shift intolerance after 15-day schedule of night shifts had been introduced. Thirty nursing officers who had performed night duty under the new schedule of night shift were questioned about the symptoms of shift intolerance as in the earlier study [5].

In the present study only two subjects reported sleep disturbance beginning in the first 2-3 days of night shift and lasting for 10 days. One of them used hypnotics to overcome this problem. None of the subjects of the present study had night shift intolerance.

The reduction of the duration of night shift from 30 days to 15 days resulted in a dramatic reduction in the incidence of night shift intolerance from 48.3 per cent to 0 per cent. These findings are in agreement with earlier studies [1-4] and emphasize the fact that the disabling effects of night shift work can be ameliorated by devising alternative schedules of night shift work.

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