Artificial pearls in the brain

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Figure 1 Three-dimensional CT angiography showing the aneurysm of the right middle cerebral artery and numerous pearl-like drops

In September 2011, a 67-year-old man underwent 3-dimensional CT angiography for preoperative evaluation of an unruptured cerebral aneurysm, which revealed numerous pearl-like drops along the cerebral arteries (figure 1). He had undergone myelography for lumbar disc herniation in 1962, and the drops were thought to represent remnant oily contrast medium that had been in place for 49 years. At surgery, several oily drops and yellowish gelatinous substance were identified and partially removed (figure 2). Histopathologically, the drops were compatible with artificial material.

Oily contrast media were used from the early 19th to the late 20th centuries and are known to cause delayed adhesive arachnoiditis.^{1,2} The retained material had no clinical effect on our patient, but this case offers a reminder that artificial materials with very long half-lives can remain in the CNS for decades.

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Figure 2 Intraoperative view showing oily drops and gelatinous substance (arrowhead) in subarachnoid spaces around the aneurysm (arrow)

DISCLOSURES

The authors report no disclosures relevant to the manuscript. Go to Neurology.org/cp for full disclosures.

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