

EDITOR'S PAGE

Autonomic function after spinal cord lesion: animal guidelines and international standards



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Dear *Spinal Cord* reader,

We from the editorial office wish you the very best in 2009.

To start the year in the best of ways, we have a number of very exciting papers in this issue. In last year's October issue of *Spinal Cord*, we stated that the attention for autonomic dysfunctions was growing and we often felt the need for standardization. We expected to be able to publish major reports on this in the coming months.

In this issue, a very comprehensive review by Krassioukov, Inskip, L Ramer and M Ramer on autonomic assessment of animals with spinal cord injury provides tools, techniques and translation. Within the areas of autonomic dysfunction (cardiovascular, respiratory, gastrointestinal, lower urinary tract, sexual function and thermoregulation), not all aspects have been characterized to the same extent. Studies focusing on bladder and cardiovascular function greatly outnumber those on sexual function, gastrointestinal function and thermoregulation. This review provides information on the correlation between existing experimental and clinically used autonomic tests. It contains a comprehensive set of tables and illustrations to guide the reader through the complexity of autonomic assessment and dysfunctions observed following spinal cord injury.

Alexander *et al.*'s review on the international standards to document the remaining autonomic function after spinal cord injury provides a direct clinical link. The impact of a specific spinal cord injury on a person's neurological function is generally described through use of the International Standards for the Neurological Classification of Spinal Cord Injury. These standards do not provide information about the status of a person's autonomic function. This review is the result of an elaborate international process of consultation, cooperation and friendly confrontation. The result is very important and includes an overview of autonomic anatomy, classification of cardiovascular, respiratory, sudomotor and thermoregulatory function, bladder, bowel and sexual function.

Other interesting topics here are: the SF-36ww (walk-wheel) by Lee *et al.*; agreement of repeated motor and sensory scores by Mulcahey *et al.*; a qualitative analysis of fatigue after spinal cord injury by WhalleyHammell *et al.*; a randomized controlled trial on 6 months of regular passive movements on ankle joint mobility by Harvey *et al.*; remote monitoring of sitting behaviours by Yang *et al.*; and a comparative review of life satisfaction/quality of life and mood compared between Chinese and British individuals with tetraplegia by Songhuai *et al.*

More interesting data appear in the paper on the reproducibility and validity of radiographically determined gastrointestinal and segmental colonic transit times by Media *et al.*, and in a study on sperm and histology of testes in a mice model by Rezaian *et al.*

There are several very interesting case reports. The Letter and Reply to the Letter to the Editor show the active involvement of researchers and clinicians with *Spinal Cord*.

This January issue is the beginning of what will be a very interesting year for the development of further knowledge in our field.