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IN BRIEF

NEURODEVELOPMENTAL DISORDERS

Paternal obesity raises risk of autism spectrum disorders

Women who are obese before pregnancy might be more likely to have children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), but data from the Norwegian Mother and Child Cohort Study suggest that paternal obesity is a more robust risk factor. The prevalence of ASD in children with overweight fathers was 0.27%, which was nearly twice the rate seen in children whose fathers had normal BMI. A similar pattern was observed for Asperger syndrome.

Original article Surén, P. *et al.* Parental obesity and risk of autism spectrum disorder. *Pediatrics* doi:10.1542/peds.2013-3664

NEURO-ONCOLOGY

MYCN amplification affects neuroblastoma survival

The prognosis of children with neuroblastoma is affected by the number of *MYCN* copies in tumour cells, a new study suggests. Kushner *et al.* analysed data from 245 children treated for neuroblastoma since 2000, 127 of whom were amplification-negative. Children without *MYCN* amplification displayed a continuous spectrum of treatment–response outcome and generally had better survival rates than the patients with *MYCN*-amplified disease, who either had an excellent response to therapy or developed a progressive disease with a poor outcome.

Original article Kushner, B. H. *et al.* Striking dichotomy in outcome of *MYCN*-amplified neuroblastoma in the contemporary era. *Cancer* doi:10.1002/cncr.28687

PARKINSON DISEASE

Solid tissue levels of α -synuclein could aid diagnosis of PD

Parkinson disease (PD) is associated with increased α -synuclein in the brain, prompting speculation that peripheral levels of this protein could act as a disease biomarker. According to a systematic review conducted by Malek and colleagues, levels of α -synuclein in plasma and CSF have insufficient sensitivity and specificity to distinguish PD, but levels in certain solid tissues—for example, the salivary glands—might be reliable biomarkers.

Original article Malek, N. *et al.* Alpha-synuclein in peripheral tissues and body fluids as a biomarker for Parkinson's disease—a systematic review. *Acta Neurol. Scand.* doi:10.1111/ane.12247

NEURODEGENERATIVE DISEASE

Iron deposits in the brain associated with frontotemporal lobar degeneration

A team from Lille University Hospital in France has used 7 T MRI to detect differences in postmortem levels of iron in the brain across multiple neurodegenerative diseases. Compared to brains from individuals with no neurological disease, frontotemporal lobar degeneration was associated with increased iron load in multiple brain regions. In Alzheimer disease, mild increases in iron were observed in the caudate nuclei. Iron levels were normal in other studied neurodegenerative diseases.

Original article De Reuck, J. L. *et al.* Iron deposits in post-mortem brains of patients with neurodegenerative and cerebrovascular diseases: a semi-quantitative 7.0T magnetic resonance imaging study. *Eur. J. Neurol.* doi:10.1111/ene.12432