parents had migraine. (Andermann E et al. Benign familial nocturnal alternating hemiplegia of childhood. Neurology Oct 1994;44:1812-1814). (Respond: Dr Eva Andermann, Division of Neurogenetics, Montreal Neurological Hospital, 3801 University Street, Montreal, PQ, Canada H3A 2B4).

COMMENT. This apparently benign, familial form of alternating hemiplegia adds one more variety to the growing list of alternating hemiplegias of childhood. It is distinguished from the more common sporadic, classic form of AHC with a poor prognosis.

SEIZURE DISORDERS

EPIDEMIOLOGY OF INFANTILE SPASMS IN ICELAND

Incidence, etiology, development, EEG, response to ACTH, and follow-up of all cases of infantile spasms diagnosed in Iceland during a 10-year period are reported from the National University Hospital, Reykjavik, Iceland, and Columbia University, New York. In the period 1981 - 1990, 13 cases were identified and the cumulative incidence was 3 in 10,000 live births. Six were cryptogenic and seven were symptomatic in etiology. All had hypsarrhythmia, and all responded initially to ACTH or prednisolone. At follow-up, all in the cryptogenic group are seizure-free and of normal IQ. Those in the symptomatic group are mentally retarded, and 5 have persistent seizures. (Luovigsson P, Hauser WA et al. Epidemiologic features of infantile spasms in Iceland. Epilepsia July/Aug 1994;35:802-805). (Reprints: Dr W Allen Hauser, 630 W 168th St, New York, NY 10032).

COMMENT. The proportion of patients with a favorable outcome is relatively high compared to some studies. The dosage of ACTH was not stated, but the interval from onset of spasms to treatment was short, generally <1 - 3 weeks.

An unusual variant of West syndrome, with focal spasms in clusters and focal delayed myelination, is reported from Nagoya University School of Medicine, Japan (Watanabe K et al. Pediatr Neurol 1994;11:47-49). Seizures were controlled with ACTH, and development was normal at 3 yr 5 mos.

Of seventeen infants with visual abnormalities and occipital EEG discharges studied at Tohoku University School of Medicine, Sendai, Miyagi, Japan, two thirds developed West syndrome with hypsarrhythmia at follow-up. (Iinuma K et al. Epilepsia 1994;35:806-809). This study confirms previous reports of visual inattention as an early manifestation of West syndrome (see Ped Neur Briefs Sept 1993).

MORTALITY FROM EPILEPSY

Standard mortality ratios (SMRs) of patients with newly diagnosed epilepsy were determined in a prospective national population-based study at the Epilepsy Research Group, National Hospital, London; Chalfont Centre for Epilepsy; and the Institute of Public Health, Cambridge, UK. Of 1091 patients attending one of 275 UK general practices from 1984-1987, 564 were classified as definite epilepsy, 228 as possible epilepsy, 220 as febrile seizures, and 79 as not epilepsy after 6 months follow-up. Over a median follow-up of 6.9 years,

the SMR for patients with definite epilepsy was 3.0. It was highest during the first year after diagnosis (5.1), and declined to 2.5 at 3 years and 1.3 at 5 years. The SMR was highest in cases of remote symptomatic epilepsy (4.3), it was 2.9 with acute symptomatic epilepsy, 1.6 with idiopathic epilepsy, and 0 for febrile seizures. The commonest causes of death were pneumonia, cancer, and stroke. (Cockerell OC et al. Mortality from epilepsy: results from a prospective population-based study. Lancet Oct 1, 1994;344:918-921). (Respond: Dr OC Cockerell, Chalfont Centre for Epilepsy, Chalfont St Peter, Bucks SL9 0RJ, UK).

COMMENT. The high mortality in patients with epilepsy was due mainly to the underlying cause, although idiopathic epilepsy itself carries an increased risk. The death rate was highest in the first year after diagnosis, the result of associated diseases such as stroke and tumor, and then decreased progressively. Heart disease was not a factor. An increased incidence of suicide previously reported in patients with epilepsy was not confirmed in this study.

Heautoscopy, epilepsy, and suicide. A 21 year-old man with complex partial seizures who tried to commit suicide during the experience of heautoscopy is reported from the University Hospital, Zurich, Switzerland. As the classic *doppelganger* experience, heautoscopy, the reduplicative hallucination of one's own person, combines features of autoscopy (a mirror reflection of one's body) and an out of body experience (illusion of physical separation from one's own body). Seizures associated with heautoscopy usually originate in parietal or deep temporal foci. (Brugger P et al. J Neurol Neurosurg Psychiatry July 1994;57:838).

VISUALLY INDUCED SEIZURES

Photosensitivity and pattern sensitivity were evaluated in 67 reactive epileptic children, aged 4 - 19 years, at Universita "La Sapienza," Rome, Italy. Fifty-one percent showed sensitivity to both light and pattern, 33% showed photosensitivity, and 16% were pattern sensitive. Pattern sensitive patients without photosensitivity had a higher incidence of focal symptomatic epilepsies, neurologic abnormalities, and focal EEGs. The EEG in pattern sensitive children showed focal polyspikes, spikes, slow or sharp waves in occipital regions, whereas photosensitive patients had more frequent generalized polyspike-wave and spike-wave complexes in the EEG. (Brinciotti M et al. Pattern sensitivity and photosensitivity in epileptic children with visually induced seizures. Epilepsia July/August 1994;35:842-849). (Reprints: Dr M Brinciotti, Instituto di Neuropsichiatria Infantile, Universita "La Sapienza," Via dei Sabelli 108, 00185 Rome, Italy).

COMMENT. Patients with pattern sensitivity are at risk of focal, symptomatic seizures and neurologic abnormalities, whereas those with photosensitivity have generalized seizure patterns.

Video-game epilepsy. Kasteleijn-Nolst Trenite DGA, of the Instituut voor Epilepsiebestrijding, Heemstede, the Netherlands, comments on video-game epilepsy (Lancet Oct 22, 1994;344:1102-3). 50 cases have been published world wide. Mean age is 13 years, and 75% are male. One-third had a prior spontaneous or visually induced non-video-game seizure, and 50% showed epileptiform EEG discharges with photic stimulation.