



Barium Swallow

Capistrano Revisited

To the Editor.—Consider for a moment a bird whose name has become a household word in the 20th century, the barium swallow. Cousin of the bismuth swallow hatched in Walter Cannon's laboratory, he is as white as the great arctic owl, although less air-worthy. He is a bland, but gritty fellow with an atomic weight of 137, and his nickname is ambiguity.

The point of this is that the world would be a better place if the barium swallow were extinct. His name on any x-ray film requisition prompts a flurry of telephone calls until the most appropriate of his many aliases can be established in the case at hand. Barium-swallow-with-four-views-of-the-heart usually means cardiac fluoroscopy, but who can be sure? Barium swallow sometimes means esophagram. Sometimes it means gastrointestinal tract study or even small bowel study. In any case we wish he had never been conceived. He has generated more confusion than the combined imprecisions of the index of suspicion, the hemic murmur, and the possible minimal pulmonary infiltrate.

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Marihuana Smoking and Intraocular Pressure

To the Editor.—It is accepted widely that the physiologic effects of smoking marihuana are not well known, despite an acknowledged high incidence of usage. Even the President of the United States has called for a major effort to study drug effects in a scientific manner. In an attempt to investigate the effects of marihuana smoking upon the human visual system, complete ocular examinations were performed in a group of youthful subjects, before and one hour af-

ter smoking. Selection of subjects, medical and other safeguards utilized, and details of the protocol will be presented in a later publication.

Subject	Age	Initial Pressure		After Smoking		% Change (Both Eyes)
		OD, OS	OD, OS			
1	43	22 25	14 15	-38		
2	23	12½ 13	13 13	+4		
3	28	18½ 20	14 14	-27		
4	25	17 17	13 13	-23		
5	29	13½ 13½	13½ 13½	0		
6	26	10½ 10½	7 8	-30		
7	29	15 15	12½ 12½	-16		
8	21	17 15	10 8½	-42		
9	27	15 15	9½ 11	-32		
10	25	11½ 11½	9 9	-22		
11	28	14 15	7 9	-45		

The purpose of this letter is to present preliminary data concerning the most impressive change observed so far, namely, a substantial decrease in intraocular pressure observed in a large percentage of subjects. Applanation tonometry was performed by the same experienced examiner, using the same tonometer for each pair of observations. Marihuana was provided by the National Institute of Mental Health, and assays proved the concentration of tetrahydrocannabinol to be high (0.9%). Two grams were smoked by each subject using an ice-cooled water pipe.

It is our hope that further investigations by clinicians and basic scientists will be stimulated by the observations recorded in the Table. The possible implications, including the mechanism of action, and even possible therapeutic action in the treatment of glaucoma, are obvious.

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Tetracycline Treatment of Telangiectasia

To the Editor.—I was intrigued by the recent case report by Shelley, "Essential Progressive Telangiectasia: Successful Treatment with Tetracycline" (216:1343, 1971)—of a patient with this rare entity whose lesions cleared completely within a period of three months following the administration of tetracycline hydrochloride orally in a dose of 250 mg four times a day. In this 39-year-old woman, repeated general physical examinations had been noncontributory. The eruption, consisting of confluent areas of erythema and dilated capillaries, had begun on the tops and sides of the

feet seven years previously and had gradually extended onto the ankles, legs, and thighs. Shelley was unable to explain the mechanism of action of tetracycline in this condition, feeling that it might have been on the basis of some little-understood pharmacodynamic action rather than the usual wide-spectrum antibiotic effect, although he speculated that a change in bowel flora must also be considered as a therapeutic mechanism.

This report called to mind a similar case, the only one which I have seen in more than 50 years of dermatologic practice, which was apparently due to a chronic sinus infection and which cleared completely following surgical eradication of this focus of infection, accompanied by the administration of an autogenous vaccine (*Arch Derm Syph* 26:56-59, 1932). This paper cited 54 cases of generalized telangiectasia reviewed by Becker, including four of his own. Three of Becker's patients had evidence of focal infection, including mastoiditis, tonsillitis, prostatitis, and dental infection.

Our patient, a 29-year-old woman, had had her eruption for over a year and a chronic sinus infection for four or five years, characterized by right antral pain, postnasal discharge, and frequent colds. Her eruption was widely scattered, being most severe on the upper part of the trunk and arms, with nondescript or serpiginous areas of erythema and dilated capillaries. The biopsy revealed a capillaritis leading to telangiectasia and degenerative changes of the small vessels.

Since both our patient and Shelley's patient recovered following procedures capable of eliminating underlying infections, the therapeutic action of tetracycline in Shelley's patient may have been due, after all, to its broad-spectrum antibiotic effect.

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Assessment of Cardiac Performance

To the Editor.—The indirect measurement of left ventricular ejection time intervals for assessment of myocardial function was recently reviewed in an editorial (216:2007, 1971). Many reports have verified the sensitivity of this technique and its good correlation with more elaborate cardiac function tests. A potential application not suggested heretofore is the employment of serial measurements of left ventricular ejection time