There was a high incidence of cutaneous histaminoid reactions to atracurium which were of short duration and rarely associated with other signs of histamine release. The reactions do not appear to be related to the method of administration or lack of refrigeration, and they are very uncommon in elderly patients.

Ethical committee approval and informed consent were obtained.

THE CAROTID BONE AND THE CAROTID BODY OF THE HORSE

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A study of the trifurcate portion of the common carotid artery and the intercarotid bone in the horse by Furuhata, Jap. J. Vet. Res. 12, 3, 1964 suggests that the "bone serves as a firm support for the axis of the carotid body". We have further investigated this structure in ten horses. Eight were anaesthetized with chloral hydrate, exsanguinated and fixed 'in situ' by intra-arterial infusion with formaldehyde (10%); two were slaughtered in a humane way and the arteries were then removed and fixed in formaldehyde (10%). The trifurcation was dissected out and a number of measurements made of the dimensions of the arteries and of the carotid body, and their topography noted. The material was then examined histologically.

There was a discrete carotid body present in each preparation situated in a triangle formed by the junction of the lumens of the three arteries. We measured the dimensions of twenty such bodies and found the mean of the vertical diameter 4 mm (S.D. ± 1.1) and transverse diameter 2.8 mm (S.D. ± 0.6). In addition to finding such a body in each of the twelve specimens, seventeen of the specimens showed some accessory carotid tissue outside the body, which was enclosed in its fibrous capsule (Vide Höglund, Structure Högland Zeln fur Zell 76, 568, 1967). There was no observable difference between the tissues fixed 'in situ' after exsanguination and those fixed after dissection. The most interesting finding concerned the structure of the blood vessels. Although the internal carotid artery is smaller than the external carotid artery it had more elastic laminae in its wall.

The mean for the internal carotid artery was 8.77 ± 0.28, for the external carotid artery was 2.48 ± 0.36, p < 0.005, N = 35. We concluded that there were unique structures in the blood vessels in this area and that the 'Carotid Bone' is an ectopic bone associated with the special blood supply to this region. Ham, Histology 8th Ed., Lippincott, Philadelphia 1979 has summed up the work of Urist et al to show the relevance of the vascular system to ectopic bones and the significance of the osteogenic cells associated with capillaries.

The prevalence of cerebral palsy (CP) among children resident in the Eastern Health Board area at birth or before the age of four years is being compiled. It is nearing completion for children born in 1976 through 1981. All those with a diagnosis of CP and in whom the triruction began before the fourth birthday are included, regardless of the suspected cause. Those with a developmental deformity of the neural tube have been excluded.

Two hundred and seventy seven cases of cerebral palsy born in 1976 through 1981 are known to the study, giving a prevalence of 1.85 per 1000 live births. Eighteen have died and five left the area. These have been replaced by 22 cases who took up residence before the age of 4 years; one died. The prevalence among 143,145 E.H.B. (Census 1981) resident children born 1976-81 at age 4 years was 1.9/1000.

The prevalence of CP rose from 1.7/1000 live births among the 1976-8 birth cohort to 2.0/1000 in the 1979-81 cohort. This increase was due to a significant rise of 33% in diplegia. There was a slight rise in the dyskinetic category. Hemiplegia, spastic quadriplegia and ataxia showed no change.