

Furthermore, these authors distinguished two subtypes of CIDP: 1) with acute or subacute onset, a monophasic course, and complete recovery; and 2) a gradual onset, evolution of symptoms from 3 months to years, residual weakness, and no complete recoveries. Cases with an antecedent URI or tonsillitis recovered completely, whereas cases following MMR immunization had severe residual weakness.

## TOXIC DISORDERS

### **PRENATAL METHYLMERCURY AND COGNITIVE DEFICIT**

A cohort of 1022 consecutive singleton births during 1986-87 in the Faroe Islands, born to mothers who had consumed methylmercury-polluted pilot whale meat and having increased mercury concentrations in cord blood and maternal hair, received neurobehavioral evaluations at 7 years of age at Odense University, Denmark. Deficits in language, attention, and memory, and to a lesser extent in visuospatial and motor functions were revealed, even in children born to mothers with hair mercury concentrations below 10 mcg/g (50 nmol/g). A doubling in mercury exposure was associated with a developmental delay of 2 months. (Grandjean P, Weihe P, White RF et al. Cognitive deficit in 7-year-old children with prenatal exposure to methylmercury. Neurotoxicol Teratol Nov/Dec 1997;19:417-428). (Reprints: Dr Phillippe Grandjean, Odense University, Winslowparken 17, 5000 Odense, Denmark).

COMMENT. Neurobehavioral dysfunction in children born in the Faroe Islands can be related to prenatal methylmercury exposure, and has been detected at exposure levels currently considered safe.

The neurologic long-term effects of methylmercury poisoning were described in three children and a neonate in a New Mexico family who had consumed pork containing methylmercury. (Davis LE et al. 1994. Reviewed in Progress in Pediatric Neurology III, 1997;p279). At 22 year follow-up, 2 had died, and 2 had cortical blindness, ataxia, and attentional deficits.

## LEARNING AND BEHAVIOR DISORDERS

### **ASPERGER'S DISORDER AND TOURETTE SYNDROME**

Five boys with both Asperger's disorder and Tourette syndrome, exceptional verbal intelligence, and clumsiness presented with peer-related social difficulties and a flapping stereotypy in a report from New York University Medical Center. Highly specialized interests - computers, chess, music - were characteristic. Speech was sing-song or mechanical, with poor pitch modulation, conversation overfocused or tangential, and eye contact poor. Neurologic exam revealed soft signs involving incoordination of tandem gait, finger tapping, and eye-hand clumsiness. WISC IQ showed very superior verbal scores (mean, 140) and lower performance scores (mean, 115). Despite the high IQ, academic performance was poor. Visuosperceptual, motor, and attentional impairments were noted. Tics exacerbated social difficulties. (Nass R, Gutman R. Boys with Asperger's disorder, exceptional verbal intelligence, tics, and clumsiness. Dev Med Child Neurol Oct 1997;39:691-695). (Respond: Dr Ruth Nass, NYU Medical Center, 400 East 34 Street, RR311, New York, NY 10016).

COMMENT. Asperger's disorder should be considered in children of high verbal intelligence who do poorly in school, both academically and socially,