Nature Reviews Neurology **8**, 180 (2012); 20 March 2012;
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IN BRIEF

PERIPHERAL NEUROPATHIES

Liver transplant improves long-term survival rates in individuals with familial amyloid polyneuropathy

Accumulation of the liver-derived protein transthyretin is characteristic of the disease familial amyloid polyneuropathy (FAP). Although liver transplantation is an accepted treatment for FAP, survival rates of transplanted patients compared with non-transplanted patients had not been investigated. In a study of 43 non-transplanted patients and 37 hepatic graft recipients, the estimated probability of survival at 10 years was 56.1% and 100%, respectively. The authors conclude that liver transplantation is an effective treament for FAP.

Original article Yamashita, T. *et al.* Long-term survival after liver transplantation in patients with familial amyloid polyneuropathy. *Neurology* doi:10.1212/WNL.0b013e318248df18

STROKE

Short telomeres associated with increased risk of stroke

Shortened telomeres are a sign of biological ageing of the cardiovascular sytem. In a study from China, researchers investigated telomere length in leukocytes obtained from 1,309 patients with stroke and 1,309 healthy controls. Patients with stroke had significantly shorter telomeres than did controls, and short telomere length was directly associated with a high risk of ischaemic stroke. In follow-up studies, the presence of short telomeres was associated with all-cause mortality, but not with the recurrence of stroke.

Original article Ding, H. *et al.* Telomere length and risk of stroke in Chinese. *Stroke* **43**, 658–663 (2012)

TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY

Amantadine accelerates functional recovery after brain injury

Treatment with the drug amantadine hydrochloride improved functional recovery compared with placebo in a clinical trial that involved 184 patients who were in a vegetative or minimally conscious state. Compared with placebo, amantidine treatment resulted in a 0.24 point improvement on the Disability Rating Scale (DRS) during the 4-week active treatment arm. However, in the 2 weeks following treatment, the rate of improvement in the amantadine group was significantly slower than in the placebo group, and no difference was observed in DRS scores between the two groups at the end of the 6-week study.

Original article Giacino, J. T. *et al.* Placebo-controlled trial of amantadine for severe traumatic brain injury. *N. Engl. J. Med.* **366**, 819–826 (2012)

MOTOR NEURON DISEASE

A role for *SMN1* duplications in amyotrophic lateral sclerosis

Deletion of *SMN1*—the main gene that encodes survival of motor neuron protein—has been linked to muscular atrophy, but the gene had not been investigated in amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS). In a genetic association study in 847 patients with ALS and 984 controls, Blauw *et al.* found that duplication of *SMN1* was associated with susceptibility to ALS, with an odds ratio of 2.07. Neither deletion of *SMN1* nor duplications of *SMN2* were associated with ALS. The precise role of *SMN1* duplication in ALS is unknown, and the findings raise new questions about the mechanism of disease.

Original article Blauw, H. M. *et al. SMN1* gene duplications are associated with sporadic ALS. *Neurology* doi:10.1212/WNL.0b013e318249f697