Letter

Eponyms revisited

Some years ago I published a paper in the journal on dementia diagnosis which examined the use of an overlapping figure test of visuoperceptual function, a figure originally described in 1917 by the German neuropsychiatrist Walter Poppelreuter (1886-1939) and hence known as the “Poppelreuter figure”.

At that time, 2011, I was unaware of Poppelreuter’s subsequent collaboration with the Nazi regime. In light of this, and the ethical imperative to expunge from eponymic recognition those involved in Nazi activities, my view is that the term “Poppelreuter figure” should no longer be used, to be replaced, following the principle recommended by Kondziella and Zeidman, with “overlapping figure, formerly Poppelreuter figure”.

In this context, I must also mention another publication, in which a rare form of vascular dementia due to cerebral thromboangitis obliterans was described, termed Spatz-Lindenberg disease, based on a 1939 publication by these authors. At that time, 1999, I was unaware of Spatz’s collaboration, now well attested, with the Nazi regime, which included the examination of the brains of victims of the Nazi “euthanasia” programme alongside with Julius Hallervorden (see reference 2, although this does not specifically mention Spatz-Lindenberg disease). In light of this, my view is that the term “Spatz-Lindenberg” should no longer be used, to be replaced, following the principle recommended by Kondziella and Zeidman, with “cerebral thromboangitis obliterans, formerly Spatz-Lindenberg disease”.

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Declaration of interest

No conflicts of interest were declared.

References


Date received

13th June 2018

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References