
The altered whistle in tetanus

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TO THE EDITOR: These two cases, which occurred many years ago, illustrate a useful clinical sign in the diagnosis of tetanus.

An elderly man was admitted to hospital after crushing his finger in a stable door. He commented in passing that when he whistled across the park to his wife that morning, she had not heard him. However, she had heard him the previous two mornings. He was a professional whistler on the radio and, when asked, still appeared to produce a good strong whistle. As it is the high pitch that carries long distances, I pondered the causes of selective pitch loss. I suspected the “risus sardonicus” of tetanus. He was subsequently confirmed to have tetanus and survived.

Years later, a middle-aged woman with right hypochondral pain and presumed cholelithiasis presented to a country hospi-

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The Clinical Toxinology Resources website is now available at www.toxinology.com. It is a vast and growing searchable database, including 6000 images, designed to meet the needs of anyone seeking information on venomous and poisonous organisms throughout the world. Coverage is currently most complete for venomous snakes (over 800 species records); important spiders, scorpions, and marine organisms are detailed, and new records are being added weekly. In the next few months, nearly 2500 poisonous plant records will be added, along with records of poisonous mushrooms. There is also a list of antivenoms and antivenom producers worldwide. The recently updated *CSL antivenom handbook* is available in its entirety; further toxinology resource documents will be added in the future.

Access to the site is at two levels: a free general level or a more detailed subscription-based level aimed at health professionals. Subscribers can also log new cases using a secure system.

The site was developed by the Toxinology Department of the Women’s and Children’s Hospital, Adelaide, and the Department of Paediatrics at the University of Adelaide, with the assistance of a small grant and the goodwill and time of a number of experts from Australia and overseas. Subscriptions will be used to help meet the considerable costs of maintaining and extending the site. *MJA* readers are cordially invited to visit the site and to consider supporting this endeavour by subscribing.

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