CEREBELLAR DEGENERATION **MEDICAL APPENDIX**

DEFINITION

1. A progressive degeneration of the cerebellum with loss of cellular elements and atrophy of the organ.

CLINICAL FEATURES

2. The cerebellar degenerations are characterised by the development of progressive ataxia together with other associated neurological signs. The age of onset and clinical features depend on the diagnosis of the type of cerebellar degeneration. It is to be remembered that not all ataxic disorders are due to disorders of the cerebellum, and indeed not all cases of cerebellar ataxia will be due to actual degeneration of the cerebellum.

AETIOLOGY

3. Cerebellar degeneration occurs as a complication of chronic alcoholism and may also occur as a non-metastatic complication of a distant carcinoma.

4. However, the great majority of cerebellar degenerations are heredofamilial genetically-determined conditions. The more important varieties of these are Sanger-Brown's (spinocerebellar) ataxia, Marie's spastic ataxia, primary parenchymatous degeneration of the cerebellum (Holmes), olivopontocerebellar atrophy (Dejerine and Thomas), olivorubrocerebellar atrophy (Lhermitte and Lejonne), dominant spino-pontine atrophy, and delayed cortical cerebellar atrophy (Rossi, Marie, Foix and Alajouanine).

CONCLUSION

5. **Cerebellar degeneration** is a term used to describe a number of conditions which involve degeneration of part of the cerebellum. Although alcohol abuse can lead to the condition, most forms are genetically determined.

REFERENCE

Walton Sir John. Brain's Diseases of the Nervous System. 9th Ed. 1985. Oxford. Oxford University Press. pages 304-305, 364-366, 428 and 488.

December 1992