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Innocence or Ignorance

The telephone rang. The voice on the other end announced: "*This is Dr. Greatman; can I speak with Dr. Goldsmith?*" It was the legendary former chair of a major medical school department. He had retired from that position and "moved upstairs" to a senior administrative post in the medical center. Still, he remained active in his area of expertise and dominance. He also had authored the principal textbook in his field. He was a giant who had had a major effect in this area for decades. His expertise spanned the classical era of medical investigation based on histologic characterization of disease to the biochemical characterization, which, at that time, was the cutting edge for insight into pathophysiology.

I had tried without success on several occasions to show him current activities in nuclear medicine, particularly how nuclear medicine imaging could provide quantitative, or at least semiquantitative, insights into chemical biochemistry and physiology in healthy subjects and patients. To me, nuclear medicine represented a significant intellectual advance in the understanding of disease on a patient-by-patient basis, as well as in their diagnosis and management.

I had been disappointed that world-class physicians, such as Dr. Greatman, seemed at times to view nuclear medicine simply as a "technology," somewhere between radiology and medical photography.

"*I have just come back from the International Conference on _____. Have you ever heard of _____?*" He cited a routine nuclear medicine procedure that a group had used to quantify tissue malfunction in the area of his expertise. He wondered if we could do this "elegant" procedure, as he had some ideas about extending the reported observations. I assured him that we were familiar with the procedure: In fact, we were well equipped to perform it elegantly as well as regularly, and we were quite adept at it. "*Remarkable,*" he said, "*truly remarkable. I had no idea this could be done. I am completely ig..., ig...,*" he stammered. I could sense that he was on the verge of saying "*ignorant about the subject,*" but he could not make such a confession. "*I am completely ig..., ig...,*" he stammered again, and then his intellect served him with a satisfactory substitute for what he could not say. "*You know, Dr. Goldsmith, I'm completely innocent on this subject.*"

Not a bad choice of words. "Innocent" implies a willingness to learn, start a new page or a new floppy disk or access new or unused areas of

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tal study using PET and FDG showed sustained metabolic derangement after transient ischemia (8). Thus, sufficient time after PTCA may be one of the important factors to influence the recovery in BMIPP uptake in the salvaged area by PTCA. Persistent increased FDG uptake several months after successfully performed revascularization was still observed, however, by Marwick et al. (9), indicating that myocardial glucose metabolism remains abnormal in a considerable portion of salvaged myocardium. Further investigation with a number of subjects is needed to clarify the role of myocardial fatty acid metabolism after revascularization.

CONCLUSION

Our patient had significant improvement in myocardial fatty acid utilization after PTCA, suggesting that serial analysis of BMIPP imaging might provide insights into the understanding of tissue metabolic alternations after revascularization.

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Scatter

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our mind. Innocent, without bias, fresh. Rather a charming substitute for ignorance: the lack of knowledge, the guilt of having ignored or neglected an area.

Did this stammer over the choice of word reflect the arrogance of the successful, a disorder affecting the powerful in institutional medicine, a dyslexia of sorts that does not permit the confession of "ignorance?" Or did it truly reflect innocence, a willingness to learn, to begin anew, to sail uncharted waters, to recognize the achievement of others and to grow?

And what of those areas about which I am uninformed? I hope that I will only be *innocent*.

Stanley J. Goldsmith, MD

Editor-in-Chief, The Journal of Nuclear Medicine

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