

**SEPARATED BUT OCEANS APART AND FATHOMS DEEP: THE CONJOINED TWINS' LEGACY**

Dear Sir

The eve of the second death anniversary of Laleh and Ladan – the legendary adult craniopagi, July 8, 2003 is fast approaching. I am constrained to write this short note to emphasise that although much time has elapsed, the fences can still be mended, and the scientific community provided with an elaborate and comprehensive answer to the events that led to their tragic death.

“No act is a failure if you learn from it”<sup>(1)</sup>. This historical statement communicated to the press by the leading neurosurgeon, Dr Benjamin Carson, imparts an impression that the marathon tragic separation had not been a totally futile exercise but seemingly provided a new insight and new horizons in tackling such an intricate neurosurgical enigma. The medical community at large and the stalwarts in neurosurgery and neuroanaesthesia would love to hear and read scientific comments from the unsung heroes who conducted the maiden surgery on adult craniopagi.

As the incidence of craniopagus twins is fortunately staggeringly low and occurs at the rate of 5.1 times per 100,000 twin deliveries<sup>(2)</sup>, or 1 in 1.6 million births<sup>(3)</sup>, it becomes highly imperative to report these cases in the realms of medical literature so that generations to come will walk gingerly and cautiously in this difficult terrain where the angels fear to tread.

I have this unflinching belief that all craniopagi twins ought to be reported in the medical literature, specially the ones that are operated on irrespective of the outcome; and above all, adult craniopagi like Laleh and Ladan who had lived for almost three decades together under the duress of circumstances and the lack of present day neurosurgical capabilities to separate them.

Of the 48 cases reviewed by Bucholz et al<sup>(4)</sup>, 24 died in the postoperative period and two were left with a severe neurological dysfunction. They considered two determinants of operative survival, namely: area of junction in craniopagus and the venous connections. The present case, by all these standards and yardsticks, had all the paraphernalia such as a common sagittal sinus, and a massive attachment at the temporo-parieto-occipital region giving the osseous anomalies and skulls the configuration of a partially common cranium to earmark it as a case with the worst prognosis. A complex type III is a new subdivision to elucidate craniopagus twins sharing the interhemispheric fissure<sup>(5)</sup>, again carrying a high mortality.

After having spent a life time together as a single unit albeit with diverse personalities, on July 10, 2003, they were laid to rest side-by-side in two separate graves in a remote village in Fars, a province in the south west of Iran. A day after their ceremonial burial, the mother earth trembled and demonstrated its rage and wrath with an earthquake of 5.7 recorded on the Richter scale after embracing its two lovable children among intense grief and agony. The mother earth is eager to know the events of their surgical separation and scientific presentation of the data.

Yours sincerely,

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