

We have made huge progress with regards to awareness of HIV, but we must normalise testing in both primary and secondary care to decrease late and unknown HIV diagnoses. ■

JOANNE JOHN

*ST6 in genitourinary medicine / HIV, Axess Sexual Health,
Liverpool, UK*

MARK D LAWTON

*Consultant in genitourinary medicine / HIV, Axess Sexual Health,
Liverpool, UK*

latter contexts as well, CTPA can be deferred and pre-emptive thrombolysis initiated instead.^{8,9}

Alternatively, emergency pulmonary embolectomy might be deployed, as was the case in a haemodynamically compromised PE patient in whom transoesophageal echocardiography showed McConnell's sign as well as impending paradoxical embolism characterised by a thrombus straddling a patent foramen ovale.¹⁰ ■

OSCAR MP JOLOBE

Retired geriatrician, Manchester, UK

References

- 1 Hiner GE, Walters JRF. A practical approach to the patient with chronic diarrhoea. *Clin Med* 2021;21:124–6.
- 2 Public Health England. *Sexually transmitted infections (STIs): annual data tables*. Public Health England, 2020. www.gov.uk/government/statistics/sexually-transmitted-infections-stis-annual-data-tables [Accessed 27 April 2021].
- 3 Public Health England. *Prevalence of HIV infection in the UK in 2018*. Public Health England, 2019. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/843766/hpr3919_hiv18.pdf [Accessed 27 April 2021].
- 4 Public Health England. *HIV in the United Kingdom: 2014 report*. Public Health England, 2014.
- 5 May M, Gompels M, Delpech V *et al*. Impact of late diagnosis and treatment on life expectancy in people with HIV-1: UK Collaborative HIV Cohort (UK CHIC) Study *BMJ* 2011;343:d6016.
- 6 Roberts J, Ottewill M, Alfrangis C *et al*. Diagnosing HIV; better late than never...but better never late. *HIV Medicine* 2006;7:30.
- 7 Bull L, Rayment M. HIV-indicator-condition-driven HIV testing: clinically effective but still rarely implemented. *Clin Med* 2016;16:175–9.

Point-of-care transthoracic echocardiography

DOI: 10.7861/clinmed.Let.21.4.5

Editor – The point is well made that increased use of computed tomography pulmonary angiography (CTPA) in patients with low pretest probability of pulmonary embolism (PE) might pose unnecessary risk of harm to patients, and might also be an inappropriate use of scarce resources. On the other hand, when pretest probability of PE is sufficiently high, based on the presence of symptoms, ultrasonographically validated deep vein thrombosis (DVT) and D-dimer cut-off levels compliant with those proposed by Tuck *et al*, identification of stigmata of PE by point-of-care transthoracic echocardiography (TTE) might be a satisfactory alternative to CTPA.¹

The utility of point-of-care TTE as an alternative to CTPA was validated in anecdotal reports involving PE patients with cardiogenic shock or cardiac arrest.^{2–5} In all four instances, TTE showed right ventricular dilatation, which, in the context of cardiogenic shock, is highly predictive of PE or its close mimic, right ventricular myocardial infarction, the distinguishing feature of the latter being ST elevation in leads V4R–V7R.^{6,7} In all four instances, pre-test probability of PE was enhanced by ultrasonographic documentation of deep vein thrombosis.^{2–5} Most crucially, in all four instances, pre-emptive thrombolysis proved to be life-saving.

Stigmata of PE, which can be identified by TTE in haemodynamic crisis include not only right ventricular dilatation but also free floating right heart thrombus and McConnell's sign.^{2–5,8,9} In the

References

- 1 Tuck A, White HI, Abdalla BA *et al*. To scan or not to scan-D-dimers and computed tomography pulmonary angiograms in the era of COVID-19. *Clin Med* 2021;21:e155–60.
- 2 Borloz MP, Frohna WJ, Phillips CA, Antonis MS. Emergency department focused bedside echocardiography in massive pulmonary embolism. *Journal of Emergency Medicine* 2011;41:658–60.
- 3 Paterna S, Fasullo S, Di Pasquale P, Fasullo S. An unusual presentation of massive pulmonary embolism mimicking septal acute myocardial infarction treated with Tenecteplase. *J Thromb Thrombolysis* 2009;27:215–9.
- 4 Bottinor W, Turlington J, Raza S *et al*. Life-saving systemic thrombolysis. *Texas Heart Inst* 2014;41:174–6.
- 5 Piggott Z, Jelic T. Pulmonary embolism with cardiac arrest: a STEMI patient's unexpected course. *CJEM* 2018;20:S31–6.
- 6 Konstantinides SV, Meyer G, Becattini C *et al*. 2019 ESC Guidelines for the diagnosis and management of acute pulmonary embolism developed in collaboration with European Respiratory society (ERS). *Eur Heart J* 2020;41:543–603.
- 7 Gingham C, Caloianu G-A, Serban M *et al*. Right ventricular myocardial infarction and pulmonary embolism: differential diagnosis-a challenge for the clinician. *Journal of Medicine and Life* 2010;3:242–53.
- 8 Singh M, Guha D, Patterson B. Clot in transit: Point-of-care ultrasound diagnosis of acute pulmonary embolism. *J Emerg Med* 2021;60:659–60.
- 9 Pavlidis AN, Poulimenos LE, Giannakopoulos AK *et al*. Electrocardiographic changes in a patient with pulmonary embolism and septic shock. *Korean Circ J* 2011;41:692–3.
- 10 Worku B, Gulkarov I, Steele J *et al*. Paradoxical embolus in transit. *Ann Thorac Surg* 2014;98:717–9.

The index of suspicion for iron deficiency in non-anaemic subjects

DOI: 10.7861/clinmed.Let.21.4.6

Editor – A subnormal level of either the mean corpuscular haemoglobin (MCH) or the mean corpuscular haemoglobin concentration (MCHC) could be the first sign of iron deficiency without anaemia (IDWA). The underlying reason for this phenomenon was identified in a study of 219 female athletes aged 15–20 years. What emerged was that, during the progression from the status of normal iron stores (defined as serum ferritin ≥ 30 $\mu\text{g/L}$) to iron deficient status (defined as serum ferritin < 30 $\mu\text{g/L}$) the fall in MCH and MCHC antedated the fall in mean corpuscular volume (MCV), with the consequence that a stage was reached where iron deficient subjects had mean values of MCH and MCHC that were significantly lower ($p < 0.001$) than the levels of those parameters in their iron replete counterparts, despite the