

Acromegaly

Definition

A chronic condition resulting from the increased secretion of growth hormone from the Pituitary gland

Causes, Incidence & Risks

- Hypersecretion of GH causes gradual enlargement of the tissues including the bones of the face, hands, feet and skull.
- Occurs when growth hormone is excessively secreted after normal growth has stopped i.e. in adults
- Excessive growth hormone secretion prior to growth cessation causes **Giantism**

- Cause is usually a benign pituitary tumour
- Slow insidious onset (30 – 50 Yrs)
- Incidence 5 in 1,000,000

Symptoms

- Enlarged Hands/Feet
- Widened Fingers
- Enlarged Jaw
- Enlarged facial bones, esp. supraorbital ridges.
- Widely spaced teeth
- Thickened skin

(Think of Jaws from James Bond Films!!)



Symptoms Cont'd

- Carpal tunnel syndrome
- Hoarseness of voice
- Headache
- Diplopia
- Vomiting
- Fatigue
- Excessive sweating
- Weakness
- Joint immobility
- Arthralgia
- Swelling of bony areas of body
- Progressive deafness
- Weight gain
- Excessive hair

Investigations

- Blood tests reveal abnormal levels of growth hormone
- Test pituitary fx
- Test visual fields
- X-ray shows periosteal bone growth
- CAT/MRI scan shows Pituitary enlargement
- Check old photos

Treatment

- Surgical removal of tumour
- Radiation therapy if tumour is malignant
- Bromocriptine may control secretion of growth hormone in patients who are unable to undergo surgery

- Surgical treatment is successful in about 90% of cases
- Radiotherapy gives 70% of cases improvement for at least 5 years

Complications

- Hypopituitarism (following surgery)
- Hypertension
- Diabetes
- Cardiac Failure/Arrhythmias
- Arthritis
- Spinal cord compression
- Visual abnormalities