

## Injuries Continue

### An Article from Geriatrics: Viewpoint

'Beauty parlor stroke' The injuries continue To the editor:

The purpose of this letter is to remind physicians about the possible consequences of an activity as common and seemingly inoffensive as a visit to the hairdresser.

Although evidence supporting "beauty parlor stroke syndrome" has been reported,<sup>1</sup> the accounts have not resulted in any appreciable increase in public awareness. More importantly, preventive measures are not being undertaken. I reached this conclusion after extensive interviewing of physicians, older women, and individuals in the hair care industry.

My singular interest in this matter was piqued by my elderly mother's brain stem stroke a few months ago. She suffered sudden onset of dysarthria and dysphagia associated with minimal right-sided impairment of the extremities. Coincidentally, I learned that she had had her hair washed and set the day before. Upon further questioning, I also learned that her head was bent severely backwards during hair washing.

My mother's blood flow studies revealed blockage of the right vertebral artery, and MRIs suggested lacunar lesions in the brain stem. Most studies discussing vertebrobasilar artery pathogenesis support the belief that impairment or even stoppage of blood flow in the vertebrobasilar system can occur as a result of cervical spine extension accompanied by rotation or even by rotation alone.<sup>2,3</sup>

Although most reported cases resulted from cervical spine manipulations<sup>4-6</sup> other causal factors have been mentioned, including sports injuries,<sup>7-8</sup> overhead painting, prolonged overhead gazing, gymnastic and calisthenic maneuvers, and yoga. Nevertheless, a direct association with hairdresser visits was not made until Dr. Weintraub's

illuminating reports. I submit my mother's stroke as an additional case of "beauty parlor stroke syndrome."

No one knows how many similar vertebrobasilar insults may have involved a prior spine manipulation. The history-taking of vertebrobasilar disease seldom includes questions about cervical spine manipulations and certainly would never include the history of a visit to the hairdresser. These admonitions apply to anyone with possibly vulnerable vertebrobasilar vasculature, including the elderly visiting the hairdresser.

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## REFERENCES

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