

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Nephrotic syndrome in a bee-keeper

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Dr Hiemstra and his colleagues make a persuasive case for linking amyloid nephropathy to repeated bee-stings in a 78-year-old bee-keeper. However, they are surely mistaken in saying that secondary amyloidosis was ‘only relatively recently described’. The earliest account of this condition was given by Carl von Rokitansky, in 1842, who noted its predilection to involve the liver, spleen and kidneys.¹ Nineteenth-century physicians and pathologists confirmed the association with long-standing inflammatory and septic conditions, which had been noted by Giovanni Battista Morgagni and René-Théophile-Hyacinthe Laënnec years previously.

One veterinary ‘model’ of the disease, which might be relevant to the present case, was provided by the unfortunate horses who were used to prepare antitoxins: these hyper-immunised animals often died of amyloidosis. Of course, the categorisation of amyloidosis, and in particular, its association with monoclonal gammopathy (‘primary’ disease) had to wait until the twentieth century. Nevertheless, amyloidosis due to repeated anomalous antigenic stimulation has been recognised for more than 150 years!

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¹ Rokitansky C. *Handbuch der speciellen pathologischen Anatomie*. Vol 3. Vienna: Braumüller und Seidel; 1842. p. 311.