

Dear Editor,

In revealing the solution to the radiological diagnosis challenge posed in the November/December issue of this Journal, Kavakama and collaborators, on page 88 of the January/February issue⁽¹⁾, presented a case of unilateral emphysema, identified by the authors as Swyer-James syndrome (McLeod). American authors prefer “Swyer-James syndrome”, whereas British authors prefer the term “McLeod syndrome”. In fact, the first presentation of a series of cases of unilateral emphysema occurred in February of 1952 at the British Thoracic Association. In that session, W McLeod, a prominent pathologist at the Brompton Hospital and St. Thomas’ Hospital in London, presented bronchographic and radiological evidence of 9 cases of unilateral emphysema documented over several years, thereby establishing a new syndrome that had not previously been described in the literature.

According to the records of this presentation, two pathologists from the Warwick Hospital were present, the British Paul Swyer and the American G James. These two pathologists had taken and retained samples from the lung of a 6-year-old boy who died in September of 1949 with a radiological presentation similar to that of the series described by McLeod. It is likely that they associated this case with what had been previously demonstrated in the session led by McLeod. In August of 1952, Swyer and James submitted the first case of unilateral pulmonary emphysema for publication⁽²⁾, including radiological and histological documentation. However, the authors made no reference to the presentation given by McLeod only a few months before.

At the behest of his colleagues, who resented the scientific opportunism of the Anglo-American pair, and against his own will, McLeod published his 9-case series in the same journal approximately one year after the publication of the Swyer and James article⁽³⁾. Admirably, McLeod cited the article previously published on the same theme. Professor Carneiro, founder of the *Pavilion Pereira Filho*, who was an intern at the Brompton Hospital in 1965, recounted this story. The incident became well known within the hospital and throughout the scientific community, culminating in the expulsion of Swyer and James from the British Thoracic Society. Although the American literature reinforces the term Swyer-James, taking into account the precedence of publication, the British preserve the historical truth transmitted through generations and documented by the traditional and centenary British Thoracic Society.

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