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I almost did not complete my pathology exams, due to *culinarius pathologica*. This refers to the pathological need in pathologists to go the kitchen (*culina* in Latin) whenever one opens a pathology textbook. The aetiology of this disorder is the liberal sprinkling of gastronomic terms in pathology, leading to excessive secretion of the hunger hormones ghrelin, orexin and peptide YY – leading to hunger pangs – and thus the need to raid the refrigerator or pop down to the nearest hawker centre.

There are so many culinary terms in pathology (and also in radiology and gastroenterology) that if one wanted to, one could plan the menu for the day's meals, based on a reading of Papa Robbins (*Robbins and Cotran Pathologic Basis of Disease*).

CULINARIUS PATHOLOGICA



By Dr Teo Eng Swee Cuthbert, Editorial Board Member

For breakfast, one might start with the standard suppurative pericarditis, with its bread and butter appearance. Cereals are always good for health, so one might also start off with a small cell carcinoma of the lung. This highly malignant bronchogenic tumour has a distinctive cell (oat cell) that grows in clusters which exhibit neither glandular nor squamous differentiation. The

cells contain a fine granular nuclear chromatin, which give it a salt-and-pepper appearance. Remember to add a dash of inflamed omentum (milk spots, referring to foci of lymphocytes and macrophages) to your cereals. If cereal is not one's cup of tea, then how about congenital syphilis? Bone lesions begin to appear in the fifth month of gestation, and are fully developed at birth. The spirochetes

localise in endochondral ossification centres (causing osteochondritis) and in the periosteum (causing periostitis). When the skull is affected, it causes a hot cross bun-like head. This hot cross bun is also observed in variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease, thought to be due to pontine nuclei neuronal loss and ponto-cerebellar tract degeneration, with preserved (in jam jars) cortico-spinal tracts. Or how about a tart cell (a histiocyte that has engulfed the structurally-preserved nucleus of another cell)? One can then round off breakfast with a hot cup of neurofibromatosis type 1 (previously called von Recklinghausen disease). The three cardinal features of this disease are multiple neural tumours anywhere in the body, pigmented iris hamartomas (Lisch nodules) and pigmented skin lesions called café au lait spots. It is a clinical maxim that if six or more spots greater than 1.5cm in diameter are present in an adult, the person is likely to have neurofibromatosis type 1. Others may prefer ocha from one's favourite teapot stomach (gastric deformity caused by fibrosis, as in a chronic ulcer for example). If you're sensitive to caffeine, you might prefer prune juice sputum (haemorrhagic expectoration associated with lung necrosis), and then think of its various causes like pneumonia, tumour and miliary (from the word millet, a general term describing small seeds of cereals) tuberculosis.

For lunch, it's always good to start off with some pea soup diarrhoea (a foul smelling, greenish-yellow diarrhoea seen in typhoid and paratyphoid fevers) – being careful that the peas must be of the English garden variety. Chicken broth fluid (seen in acute interstitial pancreatitis) is an alternative. Soup can be followed by a salad – perhaps a combination of spinach stools (dark green, porridge-like stools), cauliflower ear (a traumatised ear), beetroot tongue (seen in pellagra)

and spiced up with onion skinning (of arterioles – hyperplastic arteriolitis of malignant hypertension).

For the main course, perhaps I could recommend pigeon breast (pectus carinatum, as in infantile rickets), sausage fingers (in acromegaly), bacony or lardaceous spleen (seen in late amyloidosis, as opposed to the sago spleen in early amyloidosis).

It is always good to end off lunch with berries and fruits. One has a great variety of conditions to choose from – rhinophyma (strawberry nose), cholesterosis (strawberry gall bladder), scarlet fever (strawberry or raspberry tongue), framboesiform yaws (raspberry yaws, caused by *Treponema pallidum* pertenuis), xeroderma pigmentosum (blackcurrant rash), typhus (mulberry rash), intussusception (redcurrant jelly stool), spontaneous subarachnoid haemorrhage (berry aneurysm), sarcoma botryoides (embryonal rhabdomyosarcoma presenting as a grape-like mass), infiltrative carcinoma of the breast (peau d'orange), ponto-cerebellar hyperplasia (which includes hypoplasia of the olives, both superior and inferior), condylomata acuminata (fig warts), epiglottitis (inflammation of Adam's apple), congenital absence of the abdominal wall with hydronephrosis and cryptorchidism (prune-belly syndrome), chronic passive congestion of the liver (nutmeg liver) or osteitis deformans (coconut-like sign of Paget disease).

For dinner, if one is particularly extravagant, one might start off with caviar lesions (varices of the tongue; it should be the black variety from the sturgeon) or cheese granulomas (caseating necrosis in tuberculosis; a blue cheese like Gorgonzola). For the main course, one could think about lobster claw (ectrodactyly, as in Karsch-Neugebauer syndrome), crab yaws (feet ulcers in yaws), Salmon-ella enterocolitis or fish mouth (mitral stenosis) curry.

I like to have some anchovy sauce (amoebic liver abscess) on my fish. A glass of port wine stain (naevus flammeus – remember Gorbachev) with dinner would be splendid.

For dessert, there is a whole variety of sweets available. Almost all doctors I know have a sweet tooth. Note how delighted we are if we can catch a patient with early diabetes mellitus so that we can start treatment to prevent organ system damage. The word 'diabetes' was supposedly coined by the second century Alexandrian physician Aretaeus. Diabetes has Greek root words – 'dia' meaning 'entirely', and 'baino' meaning 'go', describing a patient having excessive urination (urine goes through the body entirely). Mellitus has a Latin root, from 'mellis', meaning honey. Mellitus thus distinguishes this type of glycosuria from polyuria that is not associated with a sweet taste (thus, insipidus). Thomas Willis, the English physician apparently made this distinction in 1674. Think of cystic fibrosis (honeycomb lung), autosomal recessive branched-chain ketoaciduria (maple syrup urine disease), endometriosis (chocolate cyst), amoebic dysentery (chocolate stools), and non-specific peri-splenitis (sugar-icing spleen).

I could go on, but I can't finish this article because I've had a relapse of *culinarius pathologica*. Excuse me now; I'm off to the dessert store Tian Tian at Tiong Bahru Market to have some iced umbilical cord (Wharton's jelly), preferably in a goblet cell. SMA



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