



Who is conducting the deadly quartet?

The co-occurrence of nephrolithiasis and gouty arthritis remained enigmatic until the uric acid crystal was identified as the common culprit. Then a unifying pathogenic hypothesis was generated and the metabolic link accepted.

Similarly, the clinical association between cystic fibrosis and pancreatic insufficiency remained unexplained until the recognition of the cystic fibrosis transmembrane conductance regulator (CFTR).

In this issue of the *Journal*, Nambi et al (page 985) describe the metabolic syndrome, aka metabolic syndrome X and the deadly quartet, which includes (with variable expression) protean manifestations of insulin resistance, hypertriglyceridemia, hyperuricemia, and hypertension. This is frequently associated with polycystic ovary syndrome and a markedly elevated risk of coronary artery disease.

Although a unifying metabolic explanation at a molecular level does not yet exist, the clinical syndrome cannot be denied, and its existence warrants aggressive intervention by the physician with an eye focused on prevention.

Brotman and Girod (page 990) offer their pathophysiologic interpretation of the syndrome, suggesting that freewheeling counterregulatory controls gone awry can explain the deadly quartet.

Whoever is conducting the deadly quartet, we cannot afford to ignore the tune it is playing. A little hypertension coupled with a little acanthosis, postprandial hyperglycemia, and hypertriglyceridemia should not be dismissed as a matter of chance or poor luck. We should recognize the pattern of abnormalities and intervene earlier than dictated by the usual and customary risk factors for coronary artery disease.

Evidence-based, interventional outcome studies will come, but for now we should recognize the pattern to foster a more positive result for our patients.

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P.S. On another note, the *Journal* is now accepting classified advertisements for organizations recruiting physicians and for physicians seeking positions. See our announcement on the inside back cover of this issue for our rates and instructions for placing a classified ad.