

# The Modigliani head

N. Mumoli\*, M. Cei

Department of Internal Medicine, Livorno Hospital, 57100 Livorno, Italy, \*corresponding author:  
tel.: +39 (0)586-22 33 31, fax: +39 (0)586-22 32 85, e-mail: nimumoli@tiscali.it

We report a case of a 55-year-old man with a diagnosis of tuberculous meningitis.

The magnetic resonance image of the brain strongly recalled to our memory a Modigliani's head sculpture. Although we promptly recognised that this was a purely incidental finding, not resulting from any pathological involvement of the brain, we were struck by the amazing coincidence; indeed, Modigliani was born in our city and died from the same disease.

A 55-year-old man with a history of alcohol abuse and pulmonary tuberculosis presented because of headache, vomiting and fever. On neurological examination, he was confused and had neck tenderness.

Contrast-enhanced T<sub>1</sub>-weighted axial magnetic resonance imaging showed diffuse asymmetric meningeal enhancement extending deep into the base of the sulci with thick, and sometimes nodular enhancement, presumably due to inflammation.

These findings are highly suggestive of tuberculous meningitis but may also be observed in patients with sarcoidosis, Wegener's granulomatosis, or chronic meningitis.<sup>1</sup>

During apical scan (*figure 1*, left) a form of a mask strongly resembling the Modigliani stone sculpture heads (*figure 1*, right) appeared.

Cerebrospinal fluid analysis revealed pleocytosis (550 white cells x 10<sup>9</sup>/l, 85% lymphocytes), elevated protein levels (2.8 g/l), and low glucose levels (1.38 g/l). The cerebrospinal fluid culture was positive for *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* after five weeks, confirming the diagnosis of tuberculous meningitis.

Amedeo Modigliani was born in Livorno (Tuscany, Italy) on 12 July 1884. He became the most famous Italian impressionist painter (impressionists were also known by the Tuscany term Macchiaioli). In 1910, he dedicated himself solely to stone sculpture, influenced by the archaic forms of idols and primitive masks.

On 22 January 1920, an unconscious Amedeo was brought to the 'Ospedale della Charité' in Paris where he died

**Figure 1.** A magnetic resonance imaging of the brain (left) showed an image mimicking the Modigliani stone sculpture head (right)



of tuberculous meningitis without having regained consciousness.<sup>2-5</sup>

On the contrary, our patient began treatment with a standard antituberculosis regimen, and his condition slowly improved.

## REFERENCES

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