

**Commentary on:** Andrews JM, Gutstadt JP, Itabashi HH, Dowell SJ, Schuwhardt MS, Miller EA. Central nervous system consequences of an unusual body disposal strategy: case report and brief experimental investigation. J Forensic Sci 2003;48(5):1153–1157

Sir:

Andrews and colleagues point out that few reports in the literature describe brain tissue extrusion into the extradural space in association with postmortem thermal injury and suggest dural shrinkage and tearing as a mechanism for this phenomenon. Some years ago, I autopsied a middle-aged man who died in a residential fire. The body and head were badly charred (Fig. 1) and the internal organs had an intense pinkish hue; death was due to carbon monoxide poisoning. The brain was swollen and frontal lobe tissue streamed

through a dural defect in the mid frontal region in mushroom-like fashion (Fig. 2). In the case of Andrews et al., the brain was apparently normal before death; it was then boiled for a lengthy period of time turning it to shrunken curd-like material. Prior swelling of the brain in my case and the different type of thermal injury may account for the better preservation of brain tissue and may have facilitated frontal lobe extrusion.

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FIG. 1—Marked charring of body showing “boxer” position and loss of all soft tissues of head.

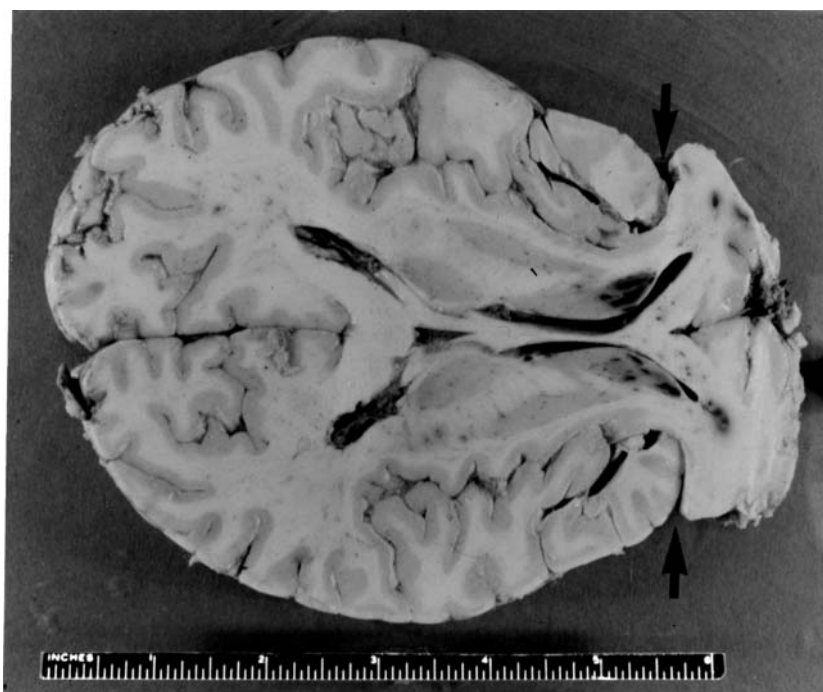


FIG. 2—Horizontal slice through fixed brain showing anterior herniation of cerebral tissue through a constricting dural defect (arrows; the dura has been completely removed).