

## E-Pearl of the Week

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September 16, 2008

### A Pearl and an Oy-ster in Headache: The 50-50 Rule

**The Pearl:** In a patient with headaches over 50 years of age and with an erythrocyte sedimentation rate (ESR) over 50, think giant cell arteritis (GCA) until proven otherwise. The diagnosis of GCA requires 3 of the following 5 criteria: age  $\geq 50$  years, new onset localized headache, temporal artery tenderness or diminished pulse, ESR  $\geq 50$ , and typical histologic findings on temporal artery biopsy (with a sensitivity 93.5% and specificity 91.2% for  $\geq 3$  of 5 criteria).

**The Oy-ster:** A normal ESR does not exclude the diagnosis. Up to 5% of patients had an ESR  $< 40$  at the time of diagnosis in one study.

For details, see: Hunder GG, Bloch DA, Michel BA, et al. The American College of Rheumatology 1990 criteria for the classification of giant cell arteritis. *Arthritis Rheum* 1990;33:1122-8; and Salvarani C, Hunder GG. Giant cell arteritis with low erythrocyte sedimentation rate: frequency of occurrence in a population-based study. *Arth and Rheum* 2001;45:140-5.