

## E-Pearl of the Week

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March 03, 2009

### Asterixis (part two)

Unilateral asterixis can localize to the contralateral thalamus, especially with lesions of the ventrolateral nucleus. This has also been reported with lesions of the *contralateral* midbrain, primary motor cortex, and parietal lobe, as well as with lesions of the *ipsilateral* pons and medulla.

Tips for the examiner:

- Be patient: Asterixis can be delayed by up to 30 seconds in awake patients who can assume a position of outstretched arms with wrists and fingers extended, keeping the eyes closed.
- Don't be fooled: bilateral asterixis is characteristically asynchronous.
- Asterixis can be detected in a patient who is unable to cooperate. By passively extending the wrist and fingers, the examiner can elicit a similar "flapping" motion of negative myoclonus against this passive resistance.
- Remember that asterixis can also be elicited in other muscles, including the legs.

### Reference

Brazis PW, Masdeu JC, Biller J. Localization in Clinical Neurology, 4th ed. 2001:573.  
Posner JB, Saper CB, Schiff ND, Plum F. Diagnosis of Stupor and Coma, 4th ed.  
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