Filters placed in the aortic arch may have some promise in capturing these emboli, although convincing evidence is lacking. Development of successful endovascular operative approaches may provide a reasonable alternative to conventional CABG procedures, especially for patients at high risk of developing cognitive dysfunction after surgery due to advanced age, previous stroke, underlying neurodegenerative disorders, or severe atheromatous disease of the carotid arteries or aortic arch.

POST-SOLID ORGAN TRANSPLANT BRAIN INJURY

Patients who have undergone solid organ transplantation are at risk for neurologic injury in the postoperative period and for months to years thereafter. Neurologic consultants should view these patients as a special population at risk for both unique neurologic complications as well as for the usual disorders found in any critically ill inpatient.

Immunosuppressive medications are administered in high doses to patients after solid organ transplant, and many of these compounds have well-described neurologic complications. In patients with headache, seizures, or focal neurologic deficits taking calcineurin inhibitors, the diagnosis of hyperperfusion syndrome should be considered, as discussed above. This neurotoxicity occurs mainly with cyclosporine and tacrolimus and can present even in the setting of normal serum drug levels. Treatment primarily involves lowering the drug dosage or discontinuing the drug. Sirolimus has very few recorded cases of neurotoxicity and may be a reasonable alternative for some patients. Other examples of immunosuppressive medications and their neurologic complications include OKT3-associated akinetic mutism and the leukoencephalopathy seen with methotrexate, especially when it is administered intrathecally or with concurrent radiotherapy. In any solid organ transplant patient with neurologic complaints, a careful examination of the medication list is required to search for these possible drug effects.

Cerebrovascular complications of solid organ transplant are often first recognized in the immediate postoperative period. Border zone territory infarctions can occur, especially in the setting of systemic hypotension during cardiac transplant surgery. Embolic infarctions classically complicate cardiac transplantation, but all solid organ transplant procedures place patients at risk for systemic emboli. When cerebral embolization accompanies renal or liver transplantation surgery, a careful search for right-to-left shunting should include evaluation of the heart with agitated saline echocardiography (i.e., "bubble study"), as well as looking for intrapulmonary shunting. Renal and some cardiac transplant patients often have advanced atherosclerosis, providing yet another mechanism for stroke. Imaging with CT or MRI with diffusion is advised when cerebrovascular complications are suspected to confirm the diagnosis and to exclude intracerebral hemorrhage, which most often occurs in the setting of coagulopathy secondary to liver failure or after cardiac bypass procedures.

Given that patients with solid organ transplants are chronically immunosuppressed, infections are a common concern **(Chap. 169)**. In any transplant patient with new CNS signs or symptoms such as seizure, confusion, or focal deficit, the diagnosis of a CNS infection should be considered and evaluated through imaging (usually MRI) and possibly lumbar puncture. The most common pathogens responsible for CNS infections in these patients vary based on time since transplant. In the first month posttransplant, common pathogens include the usual bacterial organisms associated with surgical procedures and indwelling catheters. Starting in the second month posttransplant, opportunistic infections of the CNS become more common, including *Nocardia* and *Toxoplasma* species as well as fungal infections such as aspergillosis. Viral infections that can affect the brain of the immunosuppressed patient, such as herpes simplex virus, cytomegalovirus, human herpesvirus type 6 (HHV-6), and varicella, also become more common after the first month posttransplant. After 6 months posttransplant, immunosuppressed patients still remain at risk for these opportunistic bacterial, fungal, and viral infections but can also suffer late CNS infectious complications such as progressive multifocal leukoencephalopathy (PML) associated with JC virus and Epstein-Barr virus–driven clonal expansions of B cells resulting in posttransplant lymphoproliferative disorder or CNS lymphoma.

COMMON NEUROLOGIC COMPLICATIONS OF ELECTROLYTE DISTURBANCES

A wide variety of neurologic conditions can result from abnormalities in serum electrolytes, and consideration of electrolyte disturbances should be part of any inpatient neurologic consultation. **A complete general discussion of fluid and electrolyte imbalance and homeostasis can be found in Chap. 63.**

HYPERNATREMIA AND HYPEROSMOLALITY

The normal range of serum osmolality is around 275–295 mOsm/kg, but neurologic manifestations are usually seen only at levels >325 mOsm/kg. Hyperosmolality is usually due to hypernatremia, hyperglycemia, azotemia, or the addition of extrinsic osmoles such as mannitol, which is commonly used in critically ill neurologic patients. Hyperosmolality itself can lead to a generalized encephalopathy that is nonspecific and without focal findings; however, an underlying lesion such as a mass can become symptomatic under the metabolic stress of a hyperosmolar state, producing focal neurologic signs. Some patients with hyperosmolality from severe hyperglycemia can present, for unclear reasons, with generalized seizures or unilateral movement disorders, which usually respond to lowering of the serum glucose. The treatment of all forms of hyperosmolality involves calculation of apparent water losses and slow replacement so that the serum sodium declines no faster than 2 mmol/L (2 meq/L) per hour.

Hypernatremia leads to the loss of intracellular water, leading to cell shrinkage. In the cells of the brain, solutes such as glutamine and urea are generated under these conditions in order to minimize this shrinkage. Despite this corrective mechanism, when hypernatremia is severe (serum sodium >160 mmol/L [>160 meq/L]) or occurs rapidly, cellular metabolic processes fail and encephalopathy will result. There are many etiologies of hypernatremia including, most commonly, renal and extrarenal losses of water. Causes of neurologic relevance include central diabetes insipidus, where hyperosmolality is accompanied by submaximal urinary concentration due to inadequate release of arginine vasopressin (AVP) from the posterior pituitary, resulting often from pituitary injury in the setting of surgery, hemorrhage, infiltrative processes, or cerebral herniation.

HYPONATREMIA

Hyponatremia is commonly defined as a serum sodium <135 mmol/L (<135 meq/L). Neurologic symptoms occur at different levels of low sodium, depending not only on the absolute value but also on the rate of fall. In patients with hyponatremia that develops over hours, life-threatening seizures and cerebral edema may occur at values as high as 125 mmol/L. In contrast, some patients with more chronic hyponatremia that has slowly developed over months to years may be asymptomatic even with serum levels <110 mmol/L. Correction of hyponatremia, especially when chronic, must take place slowly in order to avoid additional neurologic complications. Cells in the brain swell in hypotonic hyponatremic states but may compensate over time by excreting solute into the extracellular space, leading to restoration of cell volume when water follows the solute out of the cells. If treatment of hyponatremia results in a rapid rise in serum sodium, cells in the brain may quickly shrink, leading to osmotic demyelination, a process that previously was thought to be limited exclusively to the brainstem (central pontine myelinolysis; see **Fig. 330-6**), but now has been described elsewhere in the CNS.

Treatment of hyponatremia is dependent on the cause. Hypertonic hyponatremia treatment focuses on correcting the underlying condition, such as hyperglycemia. Isovolemic hyponatremia (syndrome of inappropriate antidiuretic hormone [SIADH]) is managed with water restriction or administration of AVP antagonists. The management of choice for patients with hypervolemic hypotonic hyponatremia is free-water restriction and treatment of the underlying edematous disorder, such as hepatic failure, nephrotic syndrome, or congestive heart failure. Finally, in hypovolemic hypotonic hyponatremia, volume is replaced with isotonic saline while underlying conditions of the kidneys, adrenals, and gastrointestinal tract are addressed.