

CORRESPONDENCE

KWOK'S QUEASE

In August 1968, a Chinese friend of mine described some strange symptoms that he had felt during a Chinese dinner to celebrate his 26th birthday in July 1968 at one of the well-known restaurants in Singapore.

About half an hour after the meal commenced he had felt a numb feeling at the back of his neck, in the midline; this feeling had extended upwards until the whole of the back of the head was involved. It was not painful, but definitely unpleasant. He had been able to remain at the table but felt "tense" and had lost all interest in the enjoyment of the occasion. The symptoms had disappeared by the end of the meal. Before the onset of the symptoms he had consumed cold meat, soup and chicken.

On hearing the story I said that it resembled no condition I had ever heard of and inferred that he was exaggerating symptoms of no importance.

On 26th July 1969, he informed me that he had similar symptoms during a meal in another restaurant. He had also had one other attack earlier in 1969, about which he had not previously told me. His sister had suffered a similar attack.

In the interval I had read the Annotation on page 447 of the British Medical Journal of 24th August 1968, and subsequent correspondence, on the subject of Kwok's Quease (or "Chinese restaurant syndrome"). The symptoms of the syndrome are described and attributed to sensitivity to monosodium glutamate. It is suggested that the sensitivity might be an inherited trait. The described symptoms closely resemble my friend's experience.

I have not heard of previous reports of this syndrome in Singapore. I wonder if any of your readers have encountered similar occurrences?

M. J. Colbourne

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