Letter to the Editor

Hoover's sign

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Sir,

Jon Stone and Michael Sharpe are to be congratulated for a clear and helpful exposition of this useful test in your first issue (Practical Neurology, Volume 1, p. 50). Like them I find the sign helpful, and will try their suggestion of explaining it to the patient. They mention that the sign has not been popular in textbooks or neurological training, but I first saw it demonstrated when I was an undergraduate in Belfast in 1969. It is clearly explained in Walsh's Diseases of the Nervous System (Livingstone 1940), though not attributed to Hoover, and described and attributed to him with a reference to the 1908 paper, in The Diagnosis of Nervous Diseases by Purves-Stewart and Worster-Drought (Arnold 1952). The late Louis Hurwitz (1926–71), neurologist in Belfast, taught me this sign, but he called it 'Babinski's second sign.' Because Louis had worked at the Salpetriere and published in French in Revue Neurologique I assumed he knew that Babinski (1857–1932) had described it, and I was unaware of Hoover until recently! Now I will have to go on a search for the first description, but with my poor schoolboy French this will not be easy, can any of your readers save me some stress?

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