

Written informed consent was obtained from the patient for publication of this case report and any accompanying images.



Fig 2. Incidental finding of gas within stomach wall

**Keywords:** pneumobilia, blunt trauma, portal venous gas

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#### JOHN FAGAN AND THE PNEUMATIC TYRE

Editor,

It cannot be said of many presidents of the Ulster Medical Society that they helped to change the world but if a claim by John Fagan is true then he was one. The pneumatic tyre was patented in 1845 by Robert William Thomson who, despite demonstrating its advantages on heavy horse-drawn vehicles, could not make it a commercial success. John Boyd Dunlop, a veterinary surgeon with a large practice in May Street, Belfast, filed his own patent in 1888 but acknowledged

that it was doubtful it was valid when, in 1890, he learnt of Thomson's prior art. The efficiency and comfort of the pneumatic cycle tyre and its success in cycle races lead to a huge demand for it especially after Charles Kingston Welch made it detachable.

Sir Arthur du Cros published a history of the pneumatic tyre in 1938<sup>[1]</sup> and was well placed to do so as he had been a director of the Pneumatic Tyre and Booth's Cycle Agency (his father's company with Dunlop on the Board) and of its successors, the first being the Dunlop Pneumatic Tyre Company. John Fagan (later Sir John Fagan), twice President of the Ulster Medical Society, had suggested that Dunlop's son, Johnnie, should take up cycling as it was an excellent form of exercise. The granite setts in the streets of Belfast made riding on solid tyres a jarring experience and Dunlop began to experiment with non-solid ones, initially filling them with water. Fagan had experience of air mattresses in his medical practice and du Cros states that Fagan frequently claimed to family and friends that he had suggested to Dunlop that he would be better to use air. Du Cros knew Dunlop very well from 1892 onwards and does not record any denial by him which perhaps lends credence to Fagan's claim. Thus Fagan would seem to have had a significant influence on the re-discovery of the pneumatic tyre on which modern road and air transport depends.

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#### PARANEOPLASTIC VITELLIFORM MACULOPATHY – ASSOCIATION WITH PRIMARY CANCERS

Editor,

We wish to highlight an important potential ophthalmic paraneoplastic presentation, that should trigger further investigations to diagnose underlying malignancy.

Paraneoplastic disorders are conditions related to systemic malignancy, but the effects occur at a site remote from the original tumour or metastases.<sup>1</sup> It is estimated that paraneoplastic syndromes affecting the nervous or visual systems occur in about 0.01% of patients with cancer<sup>2</sup>. A systematic review in 2013 by Rahimy and Saraf listed the 23 cases of paraneoplastic vitelliform maculopathy (PVM) reported in the literature at that time. Most of the cases described were associated with cutaneous or choroidal melanoma and only rarely with carcinoma. All the cases in the review were either associated with metastatic disease at the time of presentation to ophthalmology or metastases were discovered within the following months<sup>3</sup>. The average age of onset was 59 years, with equal sex distribution<sup>3</sup>.