The new interactive feature: Challenge of the Month

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During our daily lives in cardiothoracic and vascular surgery, we often need to take difficult decisions in rare clinical scenarios where no good evidence can be found, even after close scrutiny of PubMed. The ‘Challenge of the Month’ articles introduce such clinical situations, which present diagnostic, decision-making or treatment puzzles.

In this new category, we welcome reports of any difficult clinical situations, which perplexed the submitting surgical team. First, the clinical scenario is published online and comments on the case are collected. Finally, the clinical team presents their solution for management of the case, together with a discussion about the method of treatment chosen and the other possible solutions mentioned in the comments received. Good illustrations with photos, videos, etc will be crucial in order to attract the interest of fellow professionals and stimulate comments. Until now, these clinical challenges were sometimes published as case reports, but might be made even more interesting after input from other surgeons on the clinical scenario presented [1, 2]. Other journals have found such an interactive approach to specific cases to be helpful: please see ‘Interactive Medical Cases’ in the New England Journal of Medicine.

An interactive approach to rare clinical problems triggering diverse solutions may serve to absorb the readers’ attention [3].

The first ‘Challenge of the Month’ comes from our clinic. During the preoperative diagnostic work-up in this patient, we were alerted to the presence of a difficult situation [4]. Since the time of that case presentation, we experienced an almost similar problem in another patient, without having had prior knowledge of it, and found the same solution to be very helpful once more.

We hope you will enjoy this new way to interact with each other about our fascinating clinical problems. Your input will make this new ‘tool’ both educational and entertaining.

REFERENCES