

PRACTICAL AND ETHICAL ISSUES Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease

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Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (CJD) is a rare transmissible - spongiform encephalopathy producing a rapidly progressive dementia; it is uniformly fatal. The causative agent seems to be a misfolded protein - a prion - that is not destroyed by conventional sterilisation techniques. UK practice involves - undertaking preoperative checks to exclude any risk factors - for CJD infection. These include family history , receipt of pituitary-derived human growth hormone, receipt of cadaveric dura mater grafts and previous brain or spinal surgery prior to 1997. Where risk factors are present, instruments must be quarantined or destroyed postoperatively .

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