slightly pleomorphic mast cells, which made up 5% of all nucleated cells. However, focal mast cell infiltration was not found histologically, and malignant mastocytosis was thought unlikely. This reactive increase in mast cells was probably caused by the application of a particular haemopoietic growth factor (G-CSF) which would also strongly suggest a very close relation between mast cells and the myelomonoeytic system.


HPV genotypes in cervical neoplasia in South Africa

Our recent publication on the prevalence of human papillomavirus (HPV) DNA in cervical intraepithelial neoplasia (CIN) using non-isotopic in situ hybridisation (NISH) in archival biopsy material from South Africa stated that there were no previously published data from that country.1 We have now become aware of a study from Cape Town on the prevalence of HPV DNA in CIN 3 using Southern analysis for HPV types 6, 11, 16, 18, 31, 33 and 35.2 There are several similarities in these independent studies using different molecular techniques (but the same probes) in patients from South Africa. Comparison of our CIN 3 group from Durban with that from Cape Town, it is evident that there is a low prevalence of HPV 16 in Durban (15/55 (27%) and Cape Town 16/98 (16%) compared with Oxford patients 24/49 (49%). Furthermore, none of these groups showed any evidence of HPV 6, 11, or 31 in CIN cases. Excluding the unclassified group in Williamson's series, the prevalence of HPV 16, 18, and 31 in CIN 3 is less than 50% in Durban and Cape Town. The unclassified HPVs in the Cape Town series (36%), along with 59% of the Durban biopsy specimens of CIN 3 (with morphological evidence of wart virus infection) that did not contain HPV DNA by NISH, confirmed the suspicion of a high prevalence of minor or unclassified HPV types in South Africa.

K COOPER
JO'D McGEE
University of Oxford.
Nuffield Department of Pathology and Bacteriology, John Radcliffe Hospital, Oxford OX3 9DS


Reconstruction of fetuses after dissection

The paper by Gau, Napijer, and Bhundia describes the use of the tissue adhesive Histoacryl Blue for the reconstruction of fetuses after dissection.1 In Huntingdon we use a similar technique, using, with ordinary Superglue (cyanoacrylate), which produces a very acceptable cosmetic result. Superglue is also very useful for closing small lacerations, particularly on the face or hands, which may be present in death cases associated with trauma, and also accidental cuts on visible areas of the neck which may occasionally occur in the course of necropsy. Persistent leakage of blood and fluid after removal of the calf muscles has also been remedied by running a line of superglue over the sutures. The use of Superglue in this way is by no means new, in fact it is used by some anatomy departments to repair small nerves and vessels on demonstration specimens, which, sometimes become severed by heavy handed prospectors or enthusiastic students. Super glue can be used by pathologists to reconstruct organs after dissection, for use as teaching specimens. I understand that some undertakers even use Superglue on the eyelids of cadavers if they will not stay closed.

Although not subjected to such a rigorous study as that by Gau et al., in my experience ordinary Superglue produces good tissue adhesion, as anyone who has ever stuck their fingers together while attempting to repair some household ornament, or child's toy, will testify. The glue line has a slightly firmer consistency than the adjacent tissue, but the glue is colourless. Any excess dries to a crust, presumably the coagulum described in Gau's paper, most of which can be removed with forceps or a scalpel blade. Super glue is much cheaper and more readily available than the specialised surgical adhesive described.

MD HARRIS
Department of Histopathology, Hitchingbrooke Hospital, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire PE18 6NT


Skin adnexal tumours

I must congratulate Dr Cotton on his paper which attempts to clear the minefield of skin adnexal tumours.1 In my experience these benign lesions cause great problems with classification, often requiring serious "bench testing" of each tumour for a full diagnosis.

Two points concern me. Dr Cotton states that "distant metastases have not been reported" for malignant pilomatricomas. Two case reports of histologically confirmed metastatic pilomatricomas do exist: Gould et al2 and Mir et al,3 both using the criteria of Lopranzi and Mihm for diagnosis.4

He also states that Merkel cell carcinoma stains "with Cam 5.2 which oet cells do not". The product information sheet for Cam 5.2 contradicts this as both tumours can stain with Cam 5.2, usually with a paranuclear "dot" positivity.5

P CROSS
Department of Histopathology, Bury General Hospital, Walmersley Road, Bury, Lancashire BL9 6GP


Dr Cotton comments:

I thank Dr Cross for his helpful comments. I have looked up the references to metastasis in malignant pilomatricomas (or pilomatrixomas) and there are about six cases that I can locate. My concern about metastasis not being reported referred to aggressive variants of pilomatricomas rather than the frank carcinomas with pilomatricoma differentiation. In the case reports that I have read some were frank squamous carcinomas but with pilomatricoma areas, some were carcinoma arising in pilomatricoma, and two were possibly metastases arising from the cellular aggressive variants of pilomatricoma. Dr Cross is, of course, right to comment that there are reports of malignant pilomatricomas that have metastasised. I am still reluctant to believe that even cellular aggressive variants do so, although I agree that frank carcinomas do.

As to Dr Cross's comments regarding cytokeratin staining of Merkel cell versus oat cell tumours, there is some conflicting evidence. Dr Rosi in Ackerman's Surgical Pathology refers only to keratin staining and does not mention CAM 5.2 as far as I can see. The reference that he quotes refers to a series of cytokeratin antibodies raised in the author's own laboratories and which are not directly comparable with CAM 5.2 as far as I can ascertain. On the whole, the typical "ball in a fist" cytoplasmic dot positivity for CAM 5.2 is highly characteristic of Merkel cell tumours in my experience, and positivity in oat cell carcinomas is much less frequent and more diffuse when it occurs.
Reconstruction of fetuses after dissection.

M D Harris

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