Letters to the Editor

References

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were seen in two and three cases respectively. Ultrastructural examination showed electron-dense deposits localised in the mesangium in nine cases.

Patients were treated during the first month with prednisone 1 mg/kg per day. During the next two months the dose was reduced to 1 mg/kg on alternate days and then gradually decreased. Steroid-resistant patients were treated with 0-2 mg/kg per day of chlorambucil for three months. In no case was the total dose of chlorambucil greater than 25 mg/kg. One nephrotic patient experienced spontaneous remission and eight others were steroid-responsive. Only one of the five steroid-resistant patients treated with chlorambucil showed clinical remission. Five steroid-responsive patients relapsed. At present, four patients are “healthy,” having not relapsed for the past two years.

We think it is important to determine if the presence of IgM in renal biopsies indicates a poor prognosis in idiopathic nephrotic syndrome. Cohen et al. have suggested a relatively poor prognosis in five such patients after treatment, showing clinical remission in only one case. On the other hand, Bhasin et al. described six of eight patients who initially achieved clinical remission, although four of these later required cytotoxic drugs or were steroid-dependent. It therefore appears that whereas the short-term prognosis in IgM associated mesangial proliferative glomerulonephritis is good, the long-term outlook must be much more guarded.

We do not know whether IgM mesangial nephropathy is really a single disease entity or whether the IgM deposition is simply a concomitant immunological finding not necessarily related to the pathogenesis of the nephrotic syndrome. Only a small number of cases have been reported of this ill-defined glomerular disease. A definitive statement regarding the course and prognosis is not possible. More studies are necessary to confirm that IgM mesangial nephropathy is indeed a separate entity.

References


Dr Lawler and his colleagues comment as follows:

Thank you for inviting us to comment on the letter by Gonzalo et al. The cases which they describe appear to be very similar to ours in structural and immunopathological terms, although criteria for selection were different; thus all their 14 patients had the nephrotic syndrome, whereas 9 of our 23 patients had asymptomatic proteinuria. In our experience, based on these 23 cases and another unpublished group of 20 similar cases of IgM-associated primary diffuse mesangial proliferative glomerulonephritis, both clinical remission during steroid therapy and spontaneous improvement are uncommon, the majority of patients pursuing a chronic indolent course which, in a minority, progresses to end-stage renal failure. It may well be that what we and others, including Gonzalo et al., have described is a heterogeneous group, and that the patients who improve, either spontaneously or with steroid therapy, may represent a different pathogenetic mechanism. Nevertheless, the fact that the majority do not improve suggests that they should be considered as a distinct clinicopathological group.

We agree that further long-term studies are required to confirm IgM mesangial nephropathy as a separate entity and, if so, to determine its course and ultimate prognosis.

References


Misapplication of Russell’s name

The paper by Bartolini et al. (October 1980;33:936) contains clerical slips in the spelling: Russell’s bodies, but a more serious error in suggesting that the intracellular bodies described by Russell (1890) occur within plasma cells. Russell stated that these fuchsinophil bodies occurred within and around cancer cells, but not in sarcomata or in simple tumours.

Modern staining methods make it fairly certain that the inclusions seen in carcino ma cells are of fibrin, and this gains support by the greater number of inclusions within carcinoma cells adjacent to fibrinous coagula. On the other hand, the inclusions within plasma cells are now linked to immunological changes, do not stain exactly as fibrin, and surely should never be called Russell bodies.

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Reference


Ethanol-induced vacuolation in red cells

The article “Cytoplasmic vacuolation of peripheral blood cells in acute alcoholism” (J Clin Pathol 1980;33:1193-6) found our interest. Working in the field of haemorheology, we carry out studies of red cell deformability (RCD) using a filtration method based on a technique originally developed in our laboratory and described in this Journal.3,4 Studying healthy volunteers, we observed that RCD was reduced after alcohol intake during the night before the measurement (on average 13%). Subsequently we performed a series of in vitro experiments, determining the RCD of physiologically deformable red
cells before and after incubation with ethanol (concentration 2 and 20%,
i incubation time 1 hour; temperature 37°C). We found an average reduction in
RCD of 6 and 14%, respectively.

These preliminary results suggest that changes in RCD might be induced by
ethanol. Changes of red cell morphology are known to alter RCD. In this context
the observation that ethanol causes vacuolation of white and red cells might be
important. Although we did not observe gross changes in erythrocyte morphology
by routine light microscopy in our experiments, such changes might still be present
to a degree too minor to be detected by this method. Thus the findings reported in
the above mentioned paper could give a clue as to how to explain our results.
Further investigations are needed to study the problem.

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References
1 Reid HL, Barnes AJ, Lock PJ, Dormandy
JA, Dormandy TL. A simple method
2 Dodds AJ, O'Reilly MJG, Yates CP, et al.
Haemorheological response to plasma
3 Weed RJ, Lacelle PL, Merrill DL. Metabolic dependence of red cell

Book reviews

Practical Methods in Clinical Immunology
Series. Vol 2. Immunological Investigation
of Tropical Parasitic Diseases. V Houba. (Pp 170; £16.) Churchill
Livingstone. 1980.

It is an opportune moment for this book as
there is a resurgence of immunological interest in tropical diseases. It contains
ten chapters, each of which deals with one
or a collection of closely related tropical
parasitic diseases. In each chapter there is
a brief outline of the clinical and parasito-
logical aspects of the disease, followed by
a more extensive discussion of the immune
response. Each concludes with a detailed
appraisal of all the serological techniques
which have been applied to that particular
disease. The practical details of recom-
ended techniques at the end of each chapter and the appendix are the most
useful parts of the book. These are given
in sufficient detail for the reader to be able
to set them up in his own laboratory.

This book is a must for any parasito-
logical laboratory dealing with diagnosis
or immunological research.

ENDOCRINE DISORDERS A Pathophysiological
Approach. 2nd ed. Will G Ryan. (Pp xv
+ 148; illustrated; £13.) Year Book

This book is one of a series in Internal
Medicine and is intended to be an
introductory text for students. This
second edition has not been extensively
rewritten, a material update and the
correction of minor errors being the main
changes. It is concise and brief covering
the main aspects of endocrinology and
will be widely read by the student
interested in this topic.

The stated normal values for various
hormonal concentrations are sometimes
different from those reported in Great
Britain and values are not quoted. These
are, however, minor criticisms. The book
is aimed at the student and not at the
established clinician or laboratory worker.
It will be of great value to those struggling
to gain some knowledge of the rapidly
expanding field of endocrinology.

GW PENNINGTON

Alien Histocompatibility Antigens in
Cancer. Eds MM Bortin and RL Truitt.
(Pp 221; illustrated; $29.50.) Grune
& Stratton. 1980.

This is the hardcover edition of the March
1980 issue of Transplantation Proceedings
(Vol XII, No 1), which includes the
material presented at a conference held in
Racine, Wisc. in May 1979, together with
discussion. The presence of alien, i.e., 'not
self' for the host, histocompatibility anti-
gens on tumour cell has recently been
studied in some detail, mainly for the H-2
system of mice, where the presence of new
H-2 specificities and/or loss of existing
antigens has been demonstrated. This
phenomenon has been suggested to arise
from one of several mechanisms, including
the presence of endogenous virus (a
notorious hazard in mouse tumour
serology, well illustrated here by data from
Klein) alteration of H-2 by endogenous
virus or some other virus induced
mechanism, or more intriguingly, from
depression of existing H-2 genes, normally
suppressed by genetic regulatory factors.
The papers in this volume present
detailed evidence for the existence of these
novel antigens, and the consensus is that
these are not tumour specific trans-
plantation antigens (TSTA), although
some chemically induced tumours, they do
behave as tumour antigens (TA). The final
section deals with the potential exploita-
tion of these antigens as tools for diagnosis
and even to manipulate immunothera-
py. The field is new, potentially exciting,
and although these papers are highly technical, they deserve attention. For immunologists
with an interest in tumours, allo
transplants (which must mean more than a
select few) this book is a must. The second
symposium due to be held in late 1980 may
offer even better pickings.

HEATHER M DICK

Renal Adenocarcinoma. UICC Technical
Report Series Vol 49—A series of Work-
shops on the Biology of Human Cancer.
Report No 10. Ed G Sufrin and SJ
Beckley. (Pp 215; Sw fr 17.) UICC

The workshop set out to assess current
knowledge of, and to identify promising
areas for future research into, renal ade-
ocarcinoma. Studies on model systems,
biochemistry, immunology, cell kinetics,
epidemiology, histopathology, radiology,
chemotherapy, and biochemical and clinical
markers are reviewed in extenso and
critically analysed, and the result is a work
of reference in great deal of practical value to workers in many disciplines. The
part of the review devoted to future prospects is much less well analysed giving
the impression that virtually any and every
line of research would be worthwhile.
Despite this the volume can be recom-
manded as a standard reference for
literature.

RCB PUGH