pylori, may cause chronic active gastritis. Like C. pylori, the number of organisms can probably be suppressed but complete eradication will probably be difficult. Was case 2 endoscoped and assessed symptomatically at a later stage after surgical intervention may well have been detectable. Dr Logan and his colleagues may be right that "Gastrospirimum hominis" causes non-ulcer dyspepsia, but larger studies are needed, and I think it is still premature to draw conclusions from single patient histories.

Lack of significant effect of therapeutic propranolol on measurable platelet function in healthy subjects

Pamphilon and colleagues have shown that propranolol, a non-selective β blocker, does not significantly inhibit platelet function when therapeutic doses are administered to healthy subjects. They suggest that a different response might be obtained in patients with cardiovascular disease and hyperactive platelets. Some additional comments may be of interest.

The authors discuss the possibility that β blockers exert their action in situations where circulating catecholamine concentrations are very high. We assessed the effect of acute hypoglycaemia (during insulin stress tests) on various haematological variables in healthy subjects who had been given either placebo, nadolol, or propranolol, orally, for 10 days. These non-selective β blockers significantly inhibited some of the catecholamine-mediated effects (hypokalaemia, rise in factor VIII), but only propranolol had a marginal inhibitory effect on platelet aggregation.

In another study we found that platelet aggregation induced by adrenaline was significantly decreased in samples obtained from patients with a diagnosis of acute myocardial infarction or ischaemic heart disease who were taking β blockers when compared with a similar group of patients not taking such medication. Beta blockade may, indeed, be associated with platelet antithrombotic effects but that these may only be elicited in complex interactions with other antithrombotic measures, and the pronounced platelet hyperaggregability seen in myocardial infarction and ischaemic heart disease.

There are also important methodological considerations in assessing the effect of drugs on platelet function. For example, whole blood platelet aggregometry (impedance or "free" cell count techniques) allows the effects of drugs on platelet, red, or white cell interactions to be measured. This has occasionally resulted in a better definition, even at lower doses, of the effects of some drugs, such as nifedipine, dipryramide, heparin and ethanol, on platelet aggregation. Mean platelet volume, measured by very sensitive techniques (using a Coulter C256 channeler), may also be another very sensitive method to assess the effect of a variety of agents on platelets.


Dr Pamphilon et al comment:
The comments of Barradas and Mikhailidis are of interest and point to the relevant mechanism whereby β blockers may exert a beneficial effect in patients with myocardial infarction and ischaemic heart disease—that is, modulation of platelet hyperaggregability in susceptible subjects. The observation that propranolol but not metoprolol enhances platelet aggregation (1) is not explained.

We believe that platelet aggregation is not a function of the platelet itself but rather the interaction of the platelet with other plasma and cellular components.

Leukaemic phase of mantle zone (intermediate) lymphoma: its characterisation in 11 cases

In his parody of lymphoma classifications a distinguished editor of the Journal of Clinical Pathology reflected the confusion and cynicism of the average pathologist at the perceived hair-splitting of the lymphomaniacs in their attempts to categorise non-Hodgkin's lymphomas. The confusion over the classification of low grade non-Hodgkin's lymphomas was well illustrated by the report on the "leukaemic phase of mantle zone (intermediate) lymphoma" by Pombio de Oliveira et al. The category of intermediate cell lymphoma was first proposed by Berard et al. It was noted that the lymphoma contained some lymphocytes resembling those of well differentiated lymphocytic tumours and some atypical cells more closely resembling the poorly differentiated lymphocytes of nodular or follicular lymphoma. It is now widely accepted that lymphocytic lymphoma of intermediate differentiation (INT) and mantle zone lymphoma (MZL) are the same tumour, perhaps at different stages of evolution, and Jaffe et al have suggested that MZL should be the preferred term.

The category of centrocytic lymphoma was introduced into the Kiel classification to describe a diffuse lymphoma of small, slightly irregular lymphoid cells that were originally thought to be of follicle centre derivation (hence the name centrocyte). Subsequent studies have shown that centrocytic lymphoma is a distinct entity, clinically, morphologically, and phenotypically distinct, from follicle centre cell lymphoma. It is unfortunate and confusing that the term centrocytic lymphoma is still applied to this tumour even though it has been shown not to be of centrocyte origin. Many authors have suggested that INT/MZL is the same entity as centrocytic lymphoma. In a review of INT/MZL, Jaffe et al concluded that this tumour, "clinically, morphologically, and immunophenotypically appears virtually identical to centrocytic lymphoma of the Kiel classification." Pombo de Oliveira et al seemed slightly from that position and conclude that, "centrocytic lymphoma and INT are clearly closely related morphologically and phenotypically but may not be entirely interchangable pathological entities."

We authors further state that, "perhaps the application of molecular, genetic, or cytogenetic markers may allow such cases to be appropriately classified in future". In fact, cytogenetic studies suggest no significant difference between INT and lymphocytic lymphoma. It is my opinion that the recognition of INT based on the finding of a mixture of cells with round and cleaved nuclei is flawed. It has been recognised for years that quite apart from biological variability, fixation and processing artefacts can induce considerable variation within a single neoplasm. Lymphocytic lymphomas and centrocytic lymphomas have been considered separate entities histologically. It can, however, be difficult to separate these neoplasms on the morphology of the lymphoid cells alone, particularly in suboptimally fixed tissues. There are, however, many other features that assist in the differentiation of these neoplasms, perhaps the most reliable being the identification of paraimmunoblasts which are always present in variable numbers in lymphocytic lymphomas and never found in centrocytic lymphomas. On the basis of this criterion, figs 7 and 8 of the paper by Pombio de Oliveira et al show a centrocytic lymphoma and figs 10 and 11 a lymphocytic lymphoma. Clearly, the term INT will not be resolved until a more reliable means of identification, other than variability of nuclear shape, is used to select cases for study.

D H WRIGHT

University Department of Pathology, Southhampton General Hospital, Southampton S09 4XY


