

Nature Configured Melanotic Deposits Clearly in the History of Gynaecology

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Abstract

By 1889, a great German pathologist drew attention to findings at autopsy which, in his view, are all in a manner experiments instituted by nature. Therefore, if rightly interpreted, there will be knowledge of "laws of growth". In this context, the melanoma on account of its pigmentary potentiality should play a leading role in such searches. Consequently, this paper examines some historical data in the important field of gynaecology.

Keywords: *Autopsy; Melanoma; Gynaecology; Ovary; History*

Introduction

In 1889, the great German Pathologist, Julius Cohnheim [1], declared that the findings from tumor autopsy "are all in a manner of experiments instituted by nature, which we need only rightly interpret to get a clean idea of the causes, laws of growth, and significance of the tumour". In particular, according to Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary [2], melanoma came into use around 1838 as a pigmented tumor. In this context, a search of the old masters should throw useful light in that field which is the chosen goal of this Journal.

Historical texts

The earliest in my Collection came from Holmes Coote [3], surgeon to the North London Ophthalmic Institution in 1846. As he put it, "There is no longer a doubt but that melanotic swellings are pigment-coloured morbid products of the most varied character, and especially cancerous". He dealt with animal and human cases. In particular, he wrote:

The ovaries were converted into irregular lobulated masses, about eight inches in length, which retained no trace of natural structure. They consisted of a pale but dense cyst, filled with melanotic structure, of soft consistence but of the deepest dye. The ovaries and a cast of the liver are preserved in the museum of the Royal College of Surgeons.

By 1876, Legg [4] attended a 39-year-old woman whose excised globe was examined with the microscope after hardening in chromic acid. The diagnosis was "a melanotic sarcoma". At autopsy the findings included the following:

Uterus shows a new growth in the fore wall, the size of a pea. Numerous new growths on peritoneal surface. Both ovaries are the size of walnuts, and are formed of four or five new growths, without fluid contents.

It is of interest that, towards the end of the century, in 1895, Battle [5] combined the report on primary melanoma on the clitoris with secondaries in "bones, heart, viscera, including ovaries". In the following year, Blumer [6] reported the autopsy of an old lady some 70 years of age. The result was supplied thus.

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There were no metastases in the bladder beyond those on the peritoneal surface. In the right ovary was a nodule about the size of a pea.

Discussion

Elsewhere [7], I have shown that the medical masters of yester years duly recognized that the footsteps of nature could be traced by means of careful autopsy examination. In this series, such historical sketches have been exemplified. Indeed, I am intrigued by the measurements of the highly colored colonies being made not only in inches but also in terms of pea and walnut.

Conclusion

In conclusion, such homely descriptions are reinforced by the occasional museum preservation.

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