Correspondence

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Polycythemia rubra vera and Hairy Cell Leukaemia

G.J.		Mufti
T.J.		Hamblin
F.K.		Stevenson
M.		Fitchett

Bournemouth

G.J. Mufti, T.J. Hamblin, F.K. Stevenson, M. Fitchett, Department of Pathology, Royal Victoria Hospital, Shelley Road, Bournemouth BH1 4JG (UK)

Lisher et al., Acta haemat. 72: 49-51 (1984), report the association of polycythemia rubra vera and hairy cell leukaemia. Although they claim to be the first to report such an association we have to inform you that our own report¹ takes precedence.

Furthermore, as we show in our paper and so many others have also demonstrated, the hairy cell is a B lymphocyte. Finally, there is no evidence either in their case or ours for a transformation from polycythemia to hairy cell leukaemia. It is much more likely that we are both dealing with co-existing malignancies.

Reference

1 Mufti, G.J.; Hamblin, T.J.; Stevenson, F.; Fitchett, M.: Polycythemia rubra vera and hairy cell leukaemia in the same patient. Stud. Spleen 35: 1008-1010(1982).

Reply:

We humbly acknowledge the *primus* rights of Dr. Mufti and his associates to the first description of hairy cell leukemia in a patient with polycythemia vera. The Medline system we used for computer search of the literature failed to find their paper.

The hairy cell, no doubt, shares many characteristics of the B lymphocytes, as was also demonstrated in the cases described by us by MRBS rosette formation and by immunofluorescence staining with anti-immunoglobuline antiserum.

One inevitably wonders about the forte of Dr. Mufti's statement about the chance coexistence of the two malignancies. The frequent transformation of polycythemia vera to various and diverse forms of leukemia points to a very basic derangement of the hematopoietic system. In this context it is tempting to speculate that hairy cell leukemia is no exception.