Diagnosis of Metastatic Cancer from the Iliac Crest Biopsy

Cohen et al. [1], state that ‘it is of no value to obtain a bone marrow biopsy for the detection of bone marrow metastases in asymptomatic cancer patients with negative skeletal radio-isotope scan and negative bone X-ray films’. This statement is based on their findings of positive iliac crest biopsies in 32 (16%) of 205 patients with solid tumours, all of whom had other indications of metastatic spread, i.e.

Both radio-isotope scans and X-rays have the disadvantage of lack of specificity, and since there is a relatively high frequency of occult bone metastases (as also shown in the paper by Cohen et al. [1]; 35 patients diagnosed as having osseous metastases within a year of previously negative findings), we feel that an adequate bone biopsy, even in asymptomatic patients with known or suspected bronchogenic, prostatic or mammary tumours, is justified. And even a negative biopsy...
will provide valuable information on the state of the haematopoietic tissue, blood vessels and bone.

References


