Differentiation of Human Oral Stratified Epithelia

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with technical assistance of Margrit Amstad-Jossi

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124 figures and 28 tables, 1981

S. Karger Basel Mnchen Paris London New York Sydney

By the same author

Schroeder, H.E. and Listgarten, M.A.: 
Fine Structure of the Developing Epithelial Attachment of Human Teeth. 
2nd, revised edition 
Monographs in Developmental Biology, Vol. 2 
XIV + 146 p., 34 fig., 3 tab., 1977. ISBN 3-8055-2647-4

National Library of Medicine, Cataloging in Publication
Schroeder, Hubert E.
Differentiation of human oral stratified epithelia
Hubert E. Schroeder, with technical assistance of Margrit Amstead-Jossi. - Basel; New York: Karger, 1981
1. Epithelium 2. Mouth Mucosa - anatomy & histology
WU 101 S381d
ISBN 3-8055-1462-X

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Copyright 1981 by S. Karger AG, P.O. Box, CH-4009 Basel (Switzerland)
Printed in Switzerland by Thr AG Offsetdruck, Pratteln
ISBN 3-8055-1462-X
4.1 Total Conversion of Pattern B to AA(A) (Leukoplakia) 174
4.2 Gradual Conversion of Pattern B to AAB and ABC (Lichen planus) 186
43 Integrated Group Characteristics 195

5.0 Discussion 206
5.1 Epithelial Differentiation and Classification Re-Examined 208
5.2 Differentiation and Turnover 221
5.3 Determining Factors 223
5.4 Dedifferentiation and Redifferentiation (Wound Healing) 232
5.5 Concluding Remarks 233

6.0 Appendix 236
6.1 Key to Abbreviations 236
6.2 Sampling and Processing of Biopsy Material 238
6.3 Stereological Techniques 242
6.4 Data Computation 248
6.5 Data Tables 249

References 269
Author Index 293
Subject Index 297

Acknowledgements

This monograph is the result of the generosity, the collaboration, the loyalty and the enduring efforts of many people who in one way or the other have helped to generate and accumulate the data on oral epithelia over a period of almost 15 years. The research which contributed to this publication was supported, in part, by the Schweizerische Nationalfonds zur Frderung der wissenschaftlichen Forschung (grants 4808 and 3312.70), the Hartmann-Mller Foundation (grants 51, 106 and 147) and the Foundation of Scientific Research at the University of Zrich (grants 1969, 1975). The collection of biopsy and autopsy material was made possible by permission of my colleagues Drs. J. Bnczy (Department of Oral Surgery, Semmelweis Medical University, Budapest, Hungary), . Fejserskov (Department of Dental Pathology and Conservative Dentistry, Royal Dental College, Aarhus, Denmark), H.P. Hartmann (Institute of Forensic Medicine, University of Zrich, Switzerland), D.E. Lange (Department of Periodontology, University of Mnster, FRG), H.R. Mhlemann (Department of Cariology, Periodontology and Preventive Dentistry, Dental Institute, University of Zrich), H. Obwegeser (Department of Maxillo-Facial Surgery, Dental Institute, University of Zrich), H.P. Philipsen (Department of Oral Pathology, Royal Dental College, Aarhus), P. Stckli as well as the late Dr. R. Hotz (Department of Orthodontics.
and Childrens Dentistry, Dental Institute, University of Zrich). In particular, I am indebted to PD Dr. H.-Chr. Plagmann (Department of Periodontology, University of Mnster) who put a series of his original slide preparations at my disposal. Furthermore, processing of the large amount of material for light and electron microscopy would not have been possible without the skillful technical assistance of Mrs. M. Graf-de Beer, Mrs. S. Mnzel Pedrazzli, Mrs. K. Rossinsky and Mrs. A. Schwarzenbach. Special thanks are due to the artists Mrs. E. Jansen and Mr. E. Bhler for providing the black-and-white drawings and the graphical illustrations, and to Mrs. L. Brandenberger for photographic work. During varying periods of time, I have enjoyed the cooperation of a number of young researchers who, either incidentally or by purpose, became engaged in the quantitative stereological aspects of oral epithelia. These were, in alphabetical order, Drs. L. Andersen (Aarhus), PD J.-P. Bernimoulin (Zrich), B. Hammer (Zrich), A.J.P. Klein-Szanto (Oak Ridge, USA), M.A. Landay (Philadelphia, USA), M. Meyer (Zrich), M. Montanari (Zrich) and W. Mller-Glauser (Zrich). Also, I owe special thanks to Dr. M.A. Listgarten (Philadelphia) and to Dipl. Buol. D.J.

VIII Acknowledgements

Williams, B.Sc. (Heidelberg, FRG) for critically reading and editing the manuscript. The latter, through a series of preliminary and up to the final drafts, was in the hands of Mrs. M. Schweizer and Ms. R. Krni who masterfully provided all of the secretarial assistance needed.

Last but not least, it is a pleasure to thank the publisher, Dr. T. Karger and, in particular, the editorial and technical staff of S. Karger AG for their generosity of agreeing to print this material as well as in handling the printing and micrograph reproduction.

Foreword

In the last three to four decades, clinicians as well as researchers in opal medicine and dentistry have developed a vivid interest in the several aspects of the human oral mucosa. First of all, its pathologic alterations have attracted worldwide attention. In fact, it has been gratifying to see the valuable contributions made by dental investigators in describing, for instance, the fundamental aspects of the oral mucosa in several systemic diseases. In addition, other investigators have described the macroscopic, i.e. the clinical, features of the normal human oral mucosa in considerable detail. In so doing, they have made several suggestions for defining and classifying, with greater refinement, topographic regions of structural and clinical homogeneity as they occur in the human oral mucosa. These suggestions have been of particular help to investigators performing follow-up studies and field trials related to a variety of oral disease conditions. For
example, the Oral Health Unit of the World Health Organization, in deciding to expand its activities beyond the realm of teeth, has produced a Guide to Epidemiology and Diagnosis of Oral Mucosal Diseases and Conditions which was meant to stimulate interest in pursuing field studies of diseases of the oral mucosa.

The most important prerequisite for studying pathologic conditions of the oral mucosa is an intimate knowledge of its normal structure. Publication of this type of information has been somewhat limited, although a number of studies dealing with particular details of normal oral tissues have appeared in the literature. The situation has now been remedied by the appearance of this book. Dr. Schroeder, who has worked with the oral mucosa for the past 15 years, has collated his vast experience into a monograph which offers much more than its title promises. It is the most penetrating treatise ever produced on the structural and functional aspects of the normal human oral mucosa, in particular of its epithelial lining. Any traditional description of histologic features of the oral mucosal tissues has been based on qualitative and subjective notions gained by the use of conventional staining procedures. The great value of Dr. Schroeder’s work lies in its approach of combining histologic and electron-microscopic observations with stereologic, i.e. quantitative, data. But in addition to providing a detailed description of the various types of stratified oral epithelium, this book earns great merit for its review of the literature. A subject which may sometimes be dry reading is, in this monograph, a fascinating and instructive story, as for instance

X Foreword

that of the origins of exfoliative cytology. It should also be noted that Dr. Schroeder’s contribution includes a touch of pathology, as the approach that he uses for studying normal epithelial tissues and the conceptual framework derived from it have also been applied to and tested under pathological disease conditions such as oral leukoplakia and oral lichen planus.

Taken as a whole, this monograph is a beautiful example of how extensive, laborious, and painstaking research can be of immense significance in the better understanding of normal and, therefore, of pathologically altered tissues.

Copenhagen, November 1980 Jens J. Pindborg

To Jutta