

Inflammatory Pseudotumor of Lymph Nodes

Immunohistochemical Evidence for Its Fibrohistiocytic Nature

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Five cases of inflammatory pseudotumor (IPT) of the lymph node were investigated by means of light microscopy and immunohistochemistry to elucidate its cellular composition. The IPT is composed of a proliferation of spindle cells, inflammatory cells, and small vessels, forming high and poor cellular areas. Many spindle cells correspond to activated histiocytes as they coexpress vimentin and macrophage-associated markers; they are intermingled with vimentin-positive fibroblasts and variable numbers of vimentin- and actin-positive myofibroblasts. This mixed-cell proliferation invades and/or destroys medium- and large-sized vessels in all cases. This study indicates that the spindle cell proliferation, identified as histiocytic and fibroblastic in nature, represents the main component of the nodal IPT. We speculate that release of cytokines by the activated histiocytes may result in the development of the complex histopathologic aspects of this inflammatory process and, if inappropriate, may represent the underlying pathogenic mechanism. (Am J Pathol 1990, 137: 281–289)

A distinctive reaction of lymph nodes resembling the inflammatory pseudotumor (IPT) of other organs recently was described as a possible cause of lymphadenopathy.¹ Histologically the process primarily involves the connective tissue framework of the node (hilum, trabeculae, capsule) and shows a proliferation of spindle cells associated with small blood vessels and a polymorphic inflammatory cell reaction. Vascular lesions, microthrombi, and/or large vessel destruction are observed in most cases. Many as-

pects of the disease have suggested that the histologic alterations of nodal IPT are the result of an inflammatory process in response to different etiologies.¹ However the pathogenesis and relationship of such alterations are poorly understood.

In the present study we performed a detailed immunohistochemical analysis of five cases of nodal IPT to collect data on its cellular composition. The results indicate that the fibroblastic and histiocytic proliferation is the main event in this pathologic process and suggest that cytokines released by these cell populations might be responsible for the other histopathologic findings characteristic of this disorder.

Materials and Methods

Five cases of nodal IPT were selected for this study. Two of them, cases 1 and 2, correspond to cases 5 and 6, respectively, of the previous study.¹ The clinical data on them are given in that report.

Case 3

A 23-year-old man was admitted to the hospital because of fever (higher than 39°C), night sweats, and weight loss (9 kg) in the previous 2 months. Laboratory test results were within normal limits and extensive work-up for infections was negative. On endoscopy a submucosal tumor in the gastric fundus was found. The tumor was resected and diagnosed histologically as a low-grade leiomyosarcoma. During surgical intervention, a retroperitoneal mass of 3 to 4 cm, adherent to the inferior vena cava, was noted

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and resected. This mass showed features of nodal IPT. The postoperative course was uneventful and the patient is in good health 34 months after surgery.

Case 4

A 27-year-old man was admitted to the hospital because of fever of unknown origin and polyclonal hypergammaglobulinemia. No further clinical and laboratory anomalies were found and tests to detect infectious diseases were negative. A computed tomographic (CT) scan revealed a large retroperitoneal mass, which was surgically removed and corresponded to nodal IPT. Nineteen months after surgery the patient is in good general condition.

Case 5

The patient is a 30-year-old man who presented with fever of unknown origin and myalgia of the legs for 3 months. Physical examination showed bilateral supraclavicular lymphadenopathy. Laboratory investigations were negative, except for an elevated ESR (35 to 55), mild microcytic anemia (Hb 12.8 g/dl), with sideremia of 43 mg/dl and TIBC of 297 μ g/dl, and polyclonal hypergammaglobulinemia. Tests for antinuclear antibodies and rheumatoid factor were negative, and muscle enzymes in the serum were within normal values. Extensive investigation to detect an infection etiology was negative. A right cervical lymph node biopsy was obtained and showed IPT. Fever and myalgia promptly disappeared under treatment with indomethacin. Eight months after surgery the patient is in good general condition. He still manifests left supraclavicular lymphadenopathy.

From all cases, B5 fixed, paraffin-embedded material was used for histologic and immunohistochemical investigations. From three cases, fresh frozen material was also available. On both paraffin and fresh frozen tissue sections, immunohistochemical staining was performed using an avidin-biotin complex immunoperoxidase technique (Dakopatts, Copenhagen, Denmark). The antibodies applied and their specificities are listed in Table 1. Stainings for factor-XIIIa, Mac387 and factor VIII-RA were performed after digestion of the sections with trypsin (0.1% trypsin, Sigma T 8128, in 0.1% calcium chloride, pH 7.8, at 37°C, for 10 minutes); stainings for lysozyme and alpha-1-antichymotrypsin followed digestion of the sections with brinase (0.1% brinase 50, SWE FARM Sweden, in 0.1% calcium chloride, pH 7.6, at 37°C, for 15 minutes). Staining with *Ulex europaeus* agglutinin-I (UEA-I) was performed applying on sections peroxidase-conjugated UEA-I for 4 hours, in a dilution of 1.2 μ g/ml in phosphate-buffered saline, pH 7.2. The peroxidase reaction

product was developed with a diaminobenzidine-H2O2 solution.

Results

In all lymph node IPTs showed morphologic abnormalities similar to those reported in detail previously.¹ Briefly, alterations were found mainly in the hilum, along the trabeculae, and in the capsule of the lymph node, extending at a variable degree into the lymph node parenchyma and the perinodal fat tissue. In these areas, pre-existing structures were replaced by a highly cellular proliferation alternating with poorly cellular scarlike tissue. The former was composed of spindle cells and admixed with inflammatory cells, including plasma cells, macrophages, lymphocytes, and neutrophils in variable proportions (Figure 1). Small vessels with flattened endothelium were regularly present; some of them showed fibrin microthrombi. The fibrous, scarlike tissue was characterized by dense collagenous stroma containing scattered spindle cells. There were fewer inflammatory cells and vessels in these areas. Large- and medium-sized veins entrapped within the IPT showed segmental destruction of their walls or luminal occlusion, either by spindle and inflammatory cells, or by fibrous tissue. Remnants of the marginal sinus and intermediate sinuses were still present, but lymphatic sinuses were no longer identifiable in the hilar region.

The lymphoid parenchyma spared by the IPT showed nonspecific reactive changes.

Immunohistochemical Findings

The relevant immunophenotyping data obtained in this study are summarized in Table 2. In the highly cellular areas, all spindle cells showed strong reactivity for vimentin (Figure 2a); many of them also were labeled by antimacrophage antibodies (Figure 2b). A few spindle cells were positive for actin (Figure 3a), and only very few of them were positive for desmin. Actin-positive spindle cells were strikingly more numerous in the fibrous scarlike areas (Figure 3b).

The inflammatory cells mainly corresponded to round or irregularly shaped macrophages (Table 2) and to plasma cells; the latter expressed polyclonal cytoplasmic immunoglobulins and were strongly positive for CD31. Lymphocytes were relatively few in number and most expressed the CD3 antigen, and equal numbers of them were of the CD4+ and CD8+ subsets. Few dendritic cells positive for S100 were noted in the IPT, whereas no spindle or dendritic cells were positive for either DRC-1, or cytokeratin 8 and 18.

Table 1. Antibodies and Lectin Used in this Study and Their Specificities

Antibody	Antigen distribution in human reactive lymph nodes	Type of tissue studied (°)	Source	Reference
Anti-cytoplasmic filaments antibodies				
Vimentin	Vimentin intermediate filaments; all mesenchymal cells, and macrophages.	C, P	A	2
Desmin	Desmin intermediate filaments; smooth muscle vessel walls and reticulum cells in the extrafollicular area; bundles of cells in the capsule and in the medulla.	C, P	BB	3
Actin	All six major isoforms of actin; smooth muscle vessel walls, reticulum cells in the extrafollicular area, and pericytes surrounding high endothelial venules. Bundles of cells in the capsule and in the medulla.	C	CC	3
Cytokeratin 8 and 18	Cytokeratin polypeptides no. 8 and no. 18; reticulum cells in the extrafollicular area.	C	A	4
Anti-lymphocyte reagents				
Leu4	CD3; pan T cell.	C	BD	
OKT4; Leu3a	CD4; helper/inducer T cells; macrophages.	C	O; BD	
OKT8	CD8; suppressor/cytotoxic T cells.	C	O	
Leu14	CD22; pan B cell.	C	BD	
Anti-myeloid/macrophage reagents				
OKM1	CD11b; granulocytes, macrophages, subset of T cells.	C	O	
LeuM3	CD14; macrophages, granulocytes, interdigitating and dendritic reticulum cells; high endothelial venule endothelium.	C	BD	
SG134	CD31; granulocytes, macrophages, endothelium.	C	SG	
To5	CD35; dendritic reticulum cells, macrophages, granulocytes; some B cells.	C	D	
OKM5	CD36; platelets, macrophages, vascular endothelium.	C	O	
Lysozyme*	Macrophages, granulocytes.	P	D	5
a1-ACT*	Alpha-1-antichymotrypsin; macrophages.	P	D	6
Ferritin*	Macrophages.	P	D	7
Factor-XIIIa*	Macrophages.	P	BH	8
EBM11	22-60 kDa antigen on macrophages and interdigitating reticulum cells.	C	D	9
KP1	110 kDa antigen on macrophages.	P	OX	10
Mac387	12-26 kDa antigen on granulocytes and macrophages.	P	D	11
Anti-endothelial cell reagents				
Factor VIII-RA*	Factor VIII-related antigen; blood vessel endothelium.	C, P	D	
9 B9	Angiotensin-converting enzyme (A.C.E.); blood vessel endothelium.	C	C	12
Heca-452	200 kDa antigen on high endothelial venule endothelium, and some macrophages.	P	MA	13
UEA-I	Ulex europaeus agglutinin I, with specificity for alpha-L-fucose on blood and lymphatic vessel endothelium.	P	P	
Miscellaneous				
DRC-1	Dendritic reticulum cells.	C	D	
S100*	Interdigitating reticulum cells, dendritic reticulum cells, subset of T cells.	P	D	14
Anti-kappa*	Kappa-immunoglobulin light chain.	P	D	
Anti-lambda*	Lambda-immunoglobulin light chain.	P	D	
Anti-IgA, -IgD, -IgG, IgM.*	Alpha-, delta-, gamma-, and mu-immunoglobulin heavy chains.	P	D	

*: polyclonal antibody.

° C: cryostat sections; P: paraffin sections.

A: Amersham International, U.K.; BB: Boehringer Mannheim Biochemica, F.R.G.; CC: Chemical Credential ICN, Lisle, IL, USA; BD: Becton Dickinson, Mechelen, Belgium; O: Ortho Pharmaceutical Co., Raritan, NJ; SG: Dr. SM Goyert, Hospital for Joint Diseases, Dept. of Rheumatology, New York, NY; D: Dakopatts, Copenhagen, Denmark; BH: Behring Diagnostic, San Diego, CA; OX: Dr. DY Mason, Nuffield Department of Pathology, Oxford, U.K.; C: Institute of Experimental Cardiology, Cardiology Research Center of the USSR, Moscow, U.S.S.R.; MA: Dr. CJLM Meijer, Dept. of Pathology, Free University, Amsterdam, The Netherlands; P: Polysciences, Warrington, PA.

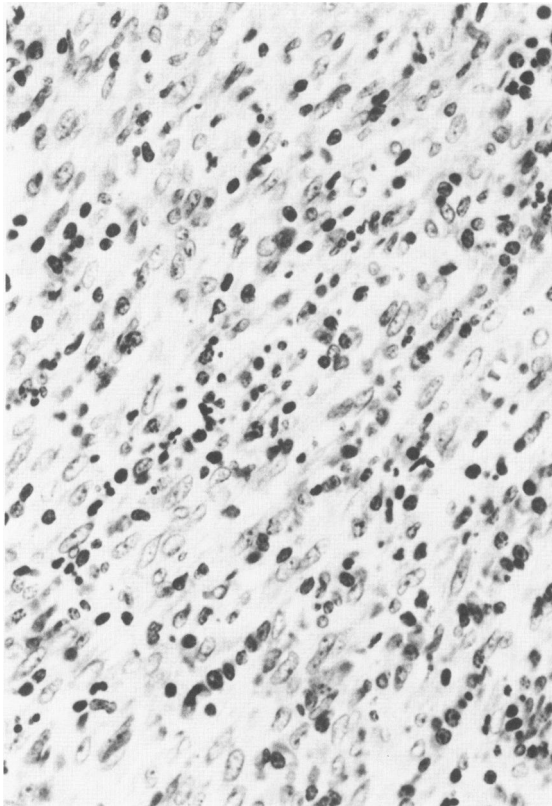


Figure 1. Selected field of a cell-rich area of IPT, showing spindle cells admixed with inflammatory cells. Hematoxylin and eosin stain; paraffin-embedded section; X400.

On immunostained sections the endothelium of small vessels expressed a homogeneous phenotype throughout the IPT (Table 2). An extreme variability in the amount of vessels became obvious on these sections; furthermore the occurrence of an elaborated connecting vascular system between intra- and extranodal tissues along the IPT was visualized (Figure 4).

In addition to the vessels with signs of transmural or endoluminal involvement by IPT recognizable on hematoxylin and eosin-stained sections, immunostaining for actin and desmin revealed many remnants of muscle walls completely disrupted by the inflammatory process (Figure 5).

Lymphatic sinuses, visualized by their endothelial lining, which stained positive for vimentin and for UEA-I, were partially compressed or destroyed by IPT. No remnants of efferent lymphatics could be identified.

Discussion

Using *in situ* immunohistochemistry, we have analyzed the cellular composition of IPT of the lymph node. The process shows highly cellular areas alternating with poorly

cellular, scarlike areas. The former are characterized by a spindle cell proliferation, accompanied by blood vessels, variable number of plasma cells, macrophages, and few lymphocytes. Immunophenotyping demonstrated the heterogeneity of the spindle cell component: all spindle cells were labeled for vimentin intermediate filaments, and many of them coexpressed macrophage-associated markers as well. Only scattered spindle cells were stained by antiactin antibody and a very small number by antidesmin antibody. Thus the cell-rich areas contain few spindle cells corresponding to myofibroblasts,¹⁵⁻¹⁷ but are largely composed of fibroblasts and histiocytes. The latter cell population was labeled by several macrophage-associated markers, eg, CD14, KP1, Mac387, EBM11, lysozyme, ferritin, and α 1-ACT, and was largely unreactive for others such as CD11b, CD31, CD35, CD36, and factor-XIIIa. These findings may indicate immaturity of these histiocytes, which might be analogous to the so-called 'fibrohistiocytoid' cells found in granulation tissue and in various chronic inflammatory conditions.¹⁸ Alternatively, variability of expression of some antigens may result from a particular functional stage of cells of the monocyte-macrophage lineage because macrophages are lysozyme- and Mac387-positive in activated states,^{5,11} whereas macrophage-derived cells can be depleted of factor-XIIIa during differentiation processes.^{8,19}

The identification of most of the spindle cells as histiocytes and fibroblasts in the richly cellular areas of nodal IPT is in accordance with the observations made by Matsubara et al²⁰ in IPT of the lung. In contrast to Dehner's study,²¹ in which myofibroblasts were found to represent the main cell component of IPT in soft tissues, myofibroblasts were absent or few in number in the cell-rich areas of IPT of the lymph node and only relatively frequent in the scarlike areas. If myofibroblasts derive from fibroblasts,^{15-17,22} this discrepancy might be related to variable expression or masking of markers indicative of myofibroblastic differentiation in nodal IPT.^{15,17,23}

Immunophenotyping may be helpful in distinguishing IPT from pathologic conditions of the lymph node, which are accompanied by a spindle cell proliferation. Sarcomas arising from dendritic reticulum cells and interdigitating reticulum cells have been demonstrated to retain antigenic determinants of their respective cell of origin, such as DRC-1, CD35, and S-100 protein,^{24,25} none of which is found on the spindle cells of IPT. There is controversy regarding the histogenesis of the spindle cells in Kaposi's sarcoma. It was shown that these cells express endothelial antigens, eg, factor VIII-RA and UEA-I, supporting their origin from vascular^{26,27} or from lymphatic endothelium;^{28,29} a recent study also showed that the spindle cells in Kaposi's sarcoma express factor XIIIa, an antigen related to dermal dendrocytes.³⁰ None of these antigens could be demonstrated on the spindle cells in IPT.

Table 2. Immunoreactivity of the Main Cell Components Observed in IPT

	Spindle cells	Macrophages	Plasma cells	Blood vessel endothelium
Cytoplasmic filaments				
Vimentin	+	+/-	-	+
Desmin	-/+	-	-	-
Actin	-/+*	-	-	-
Macrophage-associated markers				
CD11b	-†	+/-	-	-
CD14	+/-	+/-	-	-
CD31	-/+	nv‡	+	+
CD35	-/+	+/-	-	-
CD36	-/+	-/+	-	+
Lysozyme	+/-	+	-	-
a1-ACT	+/-	+	-	-
Ferritin	+/-	+	-	-
Factor-XIIIa	-/+	+/-	-	-
EBM11	+/-	+	-	-
KP1	+/-	+	-	-
Mac387	+/-	+	-	-
Endothelial markers				
Factor VIII-RA	-	-	-	+/-
A.C.E.	-	-	-	-/+
Heca-452	-	-/+	-	-
UEA-I	-	-	-	+

+ All cells positive; +/- many cells positive; -/+ few cells positive; - all cells negative.

* More positive cells were found in scarlike areas.

† Many cells positive in one of three cases.

‡ Not valuable because of the intense positivity on plasma cells.

Whorled structures observed in lymph nodes with Castleman's disease were shown to be composed of spindle cells that contain factor VIII-RA-positive granules and to correspond to blood vessel endothelium.³¹ Immunophenotypical data on malignant fibrous histiocytoma are contradictory.³² Most studies, however, did not demonstrate monocyte-macrophage markers on the atypical spindle cells in this tumor,³³⁻³⁵ which correlates with the origin of malignant fibrous histiocytoma from undifferentiated mesenchymal cells.³³⁻³⁵ Finally intranodal hemorrhagic spindle cell tumor, a recently described mesenchymal neoplasm of inguinal nodes, can resemble IPT because of its spindle cell proliferation, which may be associated with small vessels and inflammatory cells.^{36,37} Immunohistochemically and electron microscopically, this process is composed of cells that exhibit smooth muscle and myofibroblastic differentiation,^{36,37} in contrast to the IPT, which is composed of a heterogeneous spindle cell population.

A proliferation of small blood vessels is another characteristic finding of nodal IPT, in analogy to IPT in other localizations.³⁸⁻⁴⁰ Whether this vascular proliferation is of primary pathogenic importance in IPT³⁸ or a secondary feature of the process,^{20,41} is controversial. Using several antiendothelial cell markers, we noted that vessels were very abundant in some areas of IPT, but entirely lacking in others. These results do not provide definitive support for either hypothesis, but they seem to indicate a secondary role for vascular proliferation in this inflammatory process. Antigens recognized by antibodies HECA-452 and

anti-LeuM3 and normally present on high endothelial venule endothelium,^{13,42} were not detected on the vessel endothelium within IPT. These negative results make a participation of high endothelial venules in the inflammatory process unlikely, an interpretation that is supported by the fact that IPT mainly occurs in the connective tissue framework of the lymph node, rather than in the lymphoid parenchyma.¹

The present study confirmed the occurrence of pronounced large-vessel abnormalities (vessel-wall destruction and lumen obliteration) in IPT. Similar vascular changes have been noted in IPT occurring in other organs^{39,43-45} and have raised the question as to whether an immunologic insult against structural constituents of the vessels is of primary pathogenic importance in IPT.^{1,44} It should be considered, however, that these vascular abnormalities simply may indicate a peculiar destructive character of the IPT toward surrounding structures because cases of angioinvasive IPT of the lung have been shown to destroy bronchial walls as well.^{39,43} That this vascular occlusion in the lymph node is the result of a gradual destruction by the IPT, rather than of primary thrombosis due to vasculitis, is supported by the absence of frank necrotic changes in the remaining lymphoid parenchyma. Observations made under pathologic^{46,47} and experimental conditions,⁴⁸ in fact, have shown that vascular occlusion produces infarction of the lymphoid parenchyma. Furthermore a gradual destruction and occlusion of large vessels would also explain the formation of an elaborate

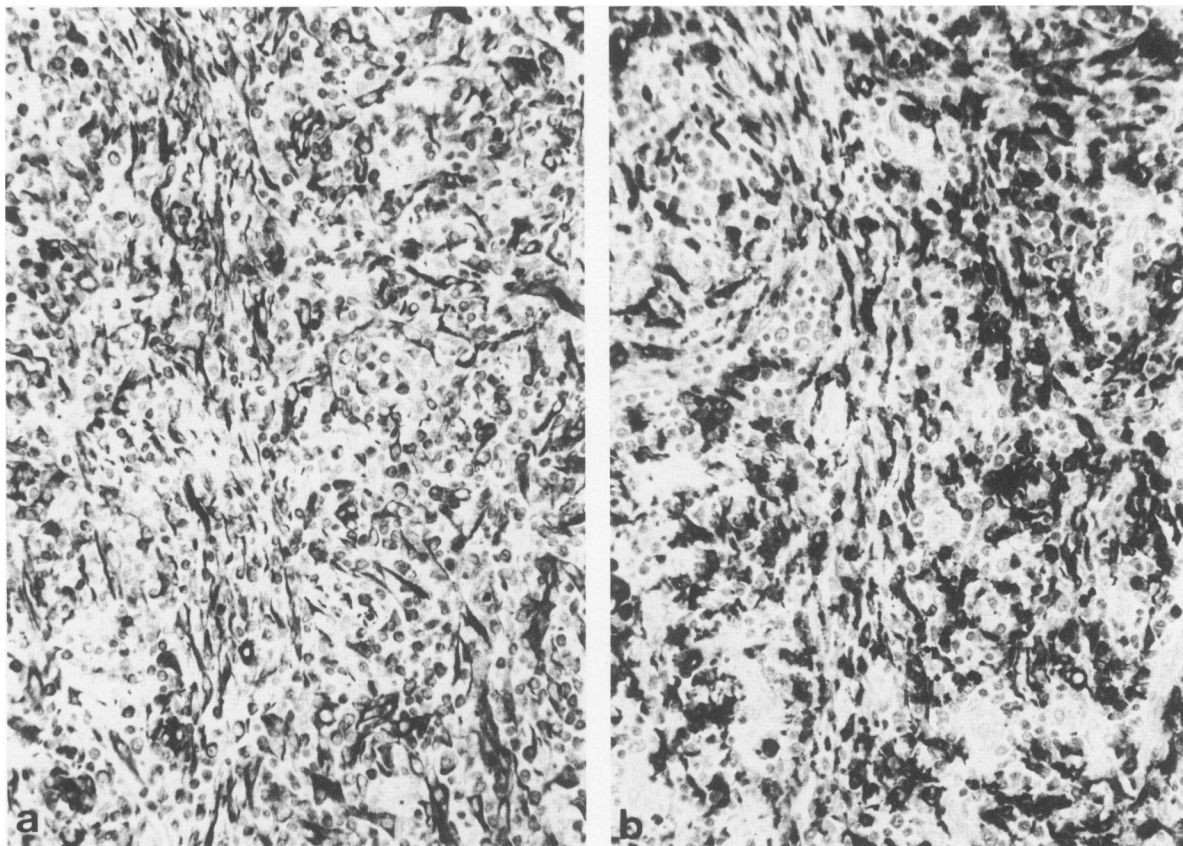


Figure 2. Semiserial paraffin sections from a cell-rich area of IPT, stained with vimentin (a) and KP1 (b). Spindle cells strongly express vimentin and many of them are KP1 positive too. In addition, vimentin and KP1 label several irregularly shaped macrophages, whereas lymphoid cells are negative for both markers. Avidin biotin complex immunoperoxidase technique for vimentin (a) and KP1 (b); all $\times 400$.

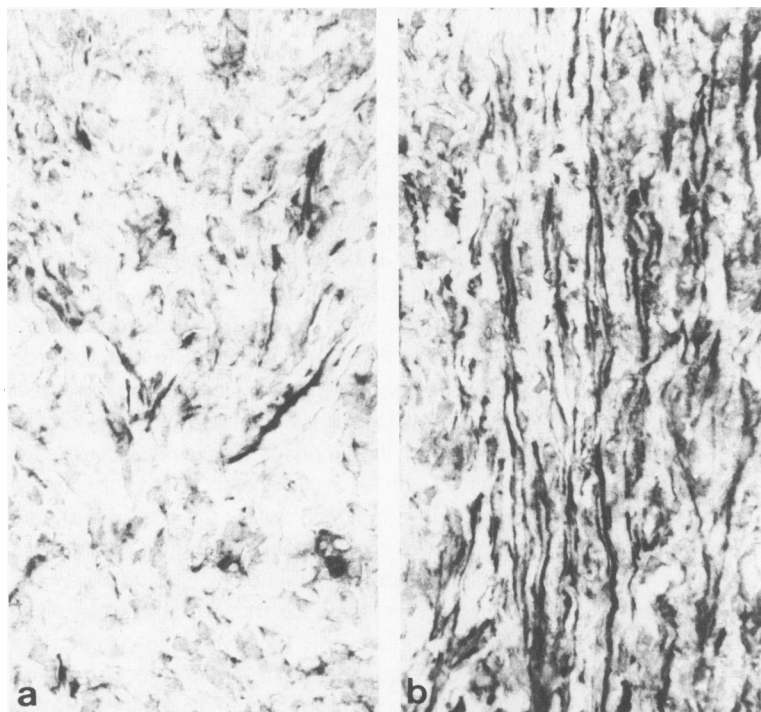


Figure 3. Frozen sections from a highly cellular area (a) and from a scarlike area (b) of IPT, both stained for actin, and showing different numbers of actin-positive spindle cells. Avidin biotin complex immunoperoxidase technique for actin; all $\times 400$.

vascular connection between the extranodal and intranodal tissues observed in the present cases.

The etiology of nodal IPT is still unknown. Local production of mediators of inflammation can explain most features of IPT, and the activated histiocytes, the main cell component of the rich cell areas of IPT, can play a central role in this process. Interleukin-1 (IL-1) and tumor necrosis factor-alpha, two major monocyte-macrophage-derived cytokines, show overlapping biologic activities.⁴⁹ Together with other macrophage-derived factors,⁵⁰ they can be responsible for proliferation of endothelial cells,^{51,52} which explains the marked vascularity of IPT, and for the formation of microthrombi,⁵³ frequently noted in the lumen of these vessels. The mitogenic effect of both cytokines on fibroblasts^{54,55} might explain the fibroblastic cell proliferation, which can progress toward fibrosis in the scarlike areas in IPT. Finally stimulation of the fibroblasts, the endothelial cells, and even the histiocytes by locally released IL-1 can result in the secretion of interleukin-6 (IL-6) by these cells,^{56,57} the latter cytokine possesses differentiation stimulatory effects on B cells⁵⁸ and, similar to what

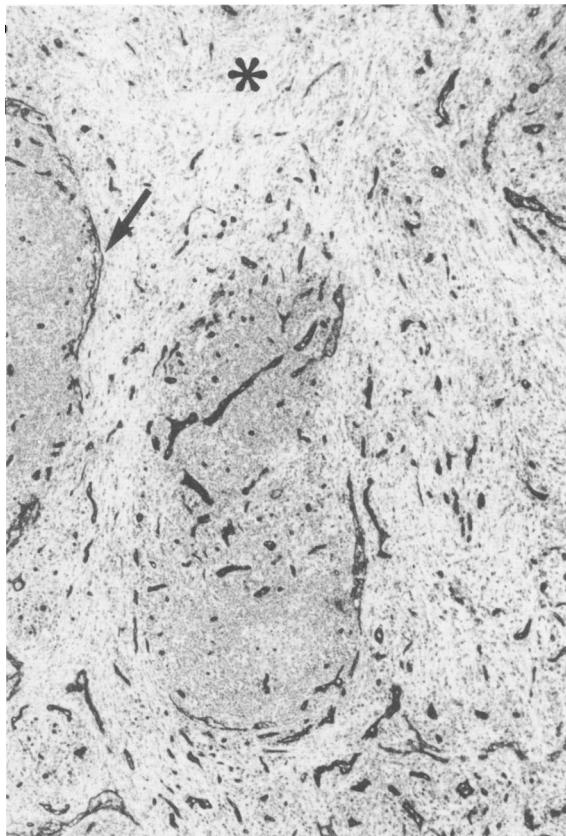


Figure 4. Low-power view of lymph node revealing UEA-1-positive vessels connecting the extranodal (*) and the intranodal tissue, along the inflammatory pseudotumor. UEA-1-positive lymphatic sinuses (arrow), and remnants of lymphoid parenchyma are recognizable. UEA-1 peroxidase-conjugated stain, paraffin-embedded section; $\times 160$.



Figure 5. The wall of a large-sized vessel destroyed by the IPT. Avidin biotin immunoperoxidase technique for desmin, paraffin-embedded section; $\times 140$.

has been found in Castleman's disease, inappropriate secretion of IL-6⁵⁹ might explain the plasma cell reaction found in IPT.

We were unsuccessful in demonstrating IL-6, IL-1, and tumor necrosis factor-alpha using *in situ* immunohistochemistry in our cases. Whether an abnormal secretion of such cytokines represents the basic mechanism resulting in IPT, demonstration of these cell products might require supernatant analysis from lymph node cell cultures, or a search for mRNA sequences encoding for cytokines using hybridization or polymerase chain reaction techniques.

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