
Differentiation of Human Oral Stratified Epithelia

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Foreword

In the last three to four decades, clinicians as well as researchers in oral 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

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

