LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

term "virus-like" particles. The particles were said to be "virus-like", then they were said to be closely reminiscent of oncogenic type A viral particles, and then the alleged resemblance was used to support the theory that viral infection may be the stimulus to the immunologic abnormalities observed in patients with lymphoid interstitial pneumonia and Sjögren's syndrome. The evidence presented is at best flimsy.

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Reference


It would indeed be of interest to link viral infection to immunologic abnormalities in Sjögren's syndrome. Contrary, however, to the authors' statement, their electron micrographs do not support such a theory. This does not mean that viral infection may not be an important etiologic factor. The morphology of animal tumor viruses, including the intracytoplasmic A particles of the mouse mammary tumor virus, were carefully defined and classified in detail in 1966.1 In 1973 a book invaluable for the morphologist was published by Dalton and Haguenau; it includes a chapter on various cellular structures commonly mistaken for virus particles.2 Clearly, the above information is available to reviewers, yet even nuclear pores are at times published as viruses in the most prestigious journals. Since the American Journal of Clinical Pathology does have a large readership of morphologists, allow me to point out that Figures 5, 6, and 7 of the above article are not "virus-like" particles. These structures are "coated vesicles," usually most numerous at the periphery of the Golgi apparatus. They are not intracytoplasmic A type oncornavirus because they do not have the double-ring doughnut structure. Intracytoplasmic A particles are not enveloped, therefore have no externally radiating spikes. The spikes are part of the viral envelope after budding and are seen on the Type B particles.

I believe morphology, even in this age of molecular biology, has an important function to fulfill, namely to relate physicochemical events to structure and to identify structures based on strictly defined criteria.

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References

The Authors' Reply

To the Editor:—We appreciate the criticism of Drs. Szakacs and Yunis.

Although we had read the articles they referred to before writing our paper, we still did not think our "virus-like" particles could be "coated" vesicles. Our interpretation, however, is not necessarily correct, and the finding should be verified by further studies.

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