It was not our intention to imply that cytopathic events only start with bacterial adhesion. It is self-evident that the loss of microvilli which precedes and facilitates close attachment must be a manifestation of cellular injury. It seems, however, that cell adhesion is required for more severe cytopathic effects and possibly the induction of an immune response. This could explain the finding of H pylori in the mucus layer and the normal capillary corpus muscosae in some cases of antral gastritis. We do not agree that bacterial adherence is likely to be a late event after epithelial injury sufficient to cause mucin depletion and cellular degeneration. On the contrary, we were surprised by the lack of degeneration seen ultrastructurally in surface cells bearing adherent organisms. Furthermore, the accumulation of actin filaments seen at bacterial attachment sites and most pronounced beneath adhesion pedestals presupposes a degree of cytoplasmic integrity and metabolic homeostasis incompatible with advanced degeneration.

Finally, with regard to bacterial survival, there seems to be biologically advantageous to be gained from a mechanism which involved attachment to degenerate cells soon to be exfoliated into the gastric lumen.

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An old student's memories

SIR,—In reference to the birthday tribute to Sir Francis Avery Jones (Gut 1990; 31: 489-93) I would like to pay tribute to my chief Sir Francis Avery Jones, father of modern British gastroenterology.

I was introduced to him on my first arriving in Britain as a British Council postgraduate scholar in 1965, by Professor Hugo Morgan to whom I was medical registrar in Karachi University Hospital. He was surrounded by his distinguished collaborators Kellock, Rowland, Richard Doll, Edward, Shiner, Lennard-Jones, Misurez and Langman. I joined him as clinical assistant, and then attended the second gastroenterology course conducted by the British Postgraduate Medical Federation in various London teaching hospitals, including the Central Middlesex, for 12 postgraduates from a dozen different countries, Sudan being represented for the first time. He introduced me to Sidney Truelove in Oxford, with whom I worked as honorary registrar to study aspects of ulcerative colitis, Crohn’s disease, and the irritable bowel syndrome; to Sir Christopher Booth at Hammersmith for absorption and metabolic studies; and to Dame Sheila Sherlock for experience in hepatology. His working day was always full and his tolerance and abilities in late middle age excelled ours in the prime of youth. The rounds, teaching sessions, and clinical meetings were so instructive that no one ever felt monotony or boredom. His approach was so modest, with interest and excitement in everyone’s contribution. He thus created in all the desire and curiosity for more teaching and more learning. I concur with Lennard-Jones’s statement: ‘He poked, rather than palpated, the abdomen in a rapid and seemingly casual manner but he always knew where he was looking for. His skill was born of the listening ear, immense experience and uncanny intuition.’

When we finished late at Central Middlesex he would drop us at our residence in his Rolls Royce. His frequent unforgettable cosmopolitan gatherings at 44 Cleveland Square for postgraduates, staff, and frequent continental and overseas visitors were happy occasions and created everlasting friendships between people from all parts of the world. It was an opportunity not to be missed including the personal experience which you never see, hear, or read about anywhere. One of the dictums he taught me was: There are two types of duodenal ulcers, the bleeding ulcer and the painful ulcer; the bleeding is painless and the painful does not bleed; if they die of their ulcers it is through exsanguination in the former and perforation in the latter.

You will all have memories of the Avery Jones school in every corner of the world; they naturally differ in nationality, skin colour, habits, religion, and mother tongue, but they are unanimously similar in one thing, and that is their affection for Avery.

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Obscure anaemia and hepatic dysfunction in Castlemaine’s disease

SIR,—The fascinating case of Castlemaine’s disease described by Featherstone et al (Gut 1990; 31: 834-7) bears a striking similarity to that of a young woman under our care.

She had a long history of vague ill health from the age of 20. Clinical examination was normal but she was found to have moderate anaemia (haemoglobin 8-10 g/l, transferrin saturation 46 g/l, ferritin 100 µg/l, iron stores normal), iron deficiency anaemia of chronic type.

Two years later, on the onset of her symptoms she developed generalised pruritus and liver function tests were abnormal (alkaline phosphatase 921 U/l, γ glutamyl transferase 122 U/l, albumin 3-6 g/l, alanine aminotransferase 25 U/l, bilirubin 6 mmol/l). Liver biopsy specimen showed mild non-specific inflammatory changes. At this stage a Kveim test was positive and a course of prednisolone was given. There was no response by clinical or laboratory criteria and steroid treatment was withdrawn.

Three years later, 13 years after the initial presentation, the patient developed menorrhagia. An ultrasound scan of the pelvis showed a large paravarximal mass. At laparotomy a 10 cm retroperitoneal mass with an enlarged para-aortic and paracaval lymph nodes was resected. After the operation the patient lost all symptoms and health returned to normal. The tumour was lymphoma, and abnormal liver function tests resolved although three years later the erythrocyte sedimentation rate remains slightly raised at 23-35 mm in the first hour. Histology of the resected tissue showed angiocentric follicular lymph node hyperplasia of the plasma cell type.

In our patient, as in the patient described by Featherstone et al, there was a long history of vague ill health and unexplained anaemia, hyperglobulinaemia, and abnormal liver function tests. The diagnostic process was protracted, which is unfortunate in view of the gratifying results of surgical excision. This diagnosis should be considered earlier in a young patient who presents with these features.

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Role of computed tomography, endoscopy, and echoendoscopy in the management of alimentary tract lipomas

SIR,—We read the paper by Kang et al about the role of computed tomography and endoscopy in the management of alimentary tract lipomas (Gut 1990; 31: 550-3). They describe the management of four cases of alimentary tract lipomas and recommend the use of endoscopy and computed tomography in the diagnosis. Recently it has been stated, in different studies, that echoendoscopy was a better procedure in the assessment of alimentary tract subepithelial lipomatosis;" digestive tract lipomas being visualised as a hyperechoic mass in the digestive tract. "Echoendoscopy uses an echographic transducer at the tip of an endoscope. Its use is increasing. We use the side-viewing echoendoscope, Olympus EUUM3. With this echoendoscope the exploration of patients 3 and 4 (lipomas of the sigmoid and oesophagus) would have been possible. For patients 1 and 2 (lipomas of colon and ileum) the use of a side-viewing echoendoscope, now available, would have also given a correct diagnosis. In the patients reported on by Kang et al, the tumours were over 3 cm in diameter. Some lipomas may be smaller and hardly capable of being seen on computed tomography. Therefore, we think that now the pretherapeutic assessment of alimentary tract lipomas should be done with endoscopy and echoendoscopy.

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Reply

SIR,—We thank Drs Roseau and Paolaggi for their comments. We have no personal experience of echoendoscopy but agree that it should be superior to computed tomography in the evaluation of submucosal lesions. This modality, however, unlike computed tomography, is as yet of limited availability. Our comments on computed tomography relate to large lesions since those smaller than 1-2 cm may not be able to be visualised.

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