Coeliac disease and autoimmune thyroid disease

EDITOR,—In their article Counsell et al state that the association between coeliac disease and autoimmune thyroid disease is not astonishing given that the HLA haplotypes B8 and DR3 are found more commonly in both than in the general population (Gut 1994; 35: 844–6). Based on the results of their data obtained in patients with coeliac disease they even suggest a routine check for thyroid function at presentation and a recheck if a gluten free diet fails to repair macrocytosis or symptoms.

Screening patients with autoimmune thyroid disease for coeliac disease, as it has been performed by Collin et al and by our group also unveils a clinically possibly important association between the two diseases. We, therefore, agree also with their second suggestion that coeliac disease should be considered in patients with autoimmune thyroid disease.

It seems noteworthy to me, however, to point out that patients with Hashimoto’s thyroiditis seem to have a higher risk of developing coeliac disease than patients with Graves’ disease alone. Patients with coeliac disease on the other hand also seem to develop hypothyroidism (Hashimoto’s) rather than Graves’ disease. Indeed, the young woman in our series of 27 patients with Hashimoto’s disease, who was found to have oligosymptomatic coeliac disease on the first specimen from the duodenum, was later diagnosed as having coeliac disease even when tested negative for autoantibodies.

I therefore want to suggest that there must be another (additional ?) link between the two diseases. This in my view is even more plausible if you consider the reports that both, Hashimoto’s thyroiditis and coeliac disease, may eventually result in lymphoma, whereas this has never been described in Graves’ disease patients.

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2 Weisell M, Vogelsang H, Penner E, Flores J. Celiac disease in autoimmune thyroid disease. Thyroid 1993; 3 (suppl 1): T30.

Infections of the gastrointestinal tract


Yet another massive tome on this subject; most are appropriate and up to date, and (but not all) accurate. The line diagrams and half-tone photographs are of good quality; 44 colour plates are included; these range from histological, endoscopic, and parasitological figures. The index is comprehensive.

But what about other books that cover this scenario? Of the American texts, Gorbach, Bartlett and Blacklow’s Infectious Diseases (1992) covers these infections well, as does the fourth edition of ‘Mandell’ (1995). Of other titles I can recommend Bouchier, Allan, Hodgson, and Keigley’s Gastroenterology: Clinical Science and Practice 2nd ed (1993). The advantage of Blaser et al is that it is devoted entirely to gut infections and their inevitable bowel flora; it is well worth reading for some time to come in this specific area dominated by the gastroenterologist and infectious diseases physician.

G C COOK


Books exist describing untoward reactions of the liver to various drugs. The largest and most comprehensive is by H J Zimmerman (Hepatotoxicity: The Adverse Effects of Drugs and Other Chemicals on the Liver, New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1978) but it is sadly out of date. The book edited by B A C Stricker (Drug-Induced Liver Injury, 2nd edition; Amsterdam: Elsevier, 1992) is justifiably in wide use. However, the drugs scene, particularly in relation to hepatotoxicity, is changing rapidly and this book from Australia, edited by Geoffrey C Farrell is both comprehensive and timely.

The first part describes underlying concepts of drug metabolism and hepatic reactions to drugs. The role of the liver in drug metabolism is contributed by Michael Murray and biochemical mechanisms by G C Farrell. Immunological mediation of drug reactions is discussed by Ian R Mackay, perhaps Australia’s most outstanding clinical immunologist. Pdela M Hall contributes an excellent chapter on histopathology, which includes 54 figures, many of them in colour.

Various drugs are discussed under the headings of mutagenic factors, clinical features, hepatic histology and course, outcome, and prevention. An up to date table covering 29 pages summarises the effects of each drug alphabetically. I could not find any omissions. Even ecstasy, a currently much discussed hepatotoxicity is annotated. This table, on floppy disc, is available free of charge on request by those who purchase the book.