

## The Spread of Melanoma to the Pleura and Peritoneum: Historical Highlights

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### Abstract

The historical background of the literature of the life sciences is deemed to be useful. Among the important early journals were the Transactions of the Pathological Society of London, which began publishing in the 1846-48 periods. Incidentally, Willis used its cases to illuminate the historical aspect of his epic monograph, "The Spread of Tumours in the Human Body." Accordingly, I propose to use them personally to collate the melanoma cases that dealt with the surface areas called the pleura and the peritoneum. The chronological order has been deemed to be worthily illustrative.

**Keywords:** Cancer; Melanoma; Pleura; Peritoneum; History

### Introduction

A Library Director, David Kronick [1] wrote on the "Literature of the Life Sciences: The Historical Background." Incidentally, he included the development of Journals. In fact, he did not mention the Transactions of the Pathological Society of London, which began to publish during the 1846-48 period [2]. In this context, I noticed that Willis [3] tended to cite the Transactions in his weighty work, "The Spread of Tumours to the Human Body." Accordingly, I propose to do so here, using the chronological approach.

### Historical Texts

- 1848 – Smith [4] was observant on opening the abdomen in a patient who had suffered from "a melanotic degeneration of the right eye". As he put it, "several tumours were found connected with the peritoneum".
- 1873 – Payne [5] found pigmented nodules which were superficially situated and projected on the surface of the right side, whereas, on the left side, "the parietal pleura had also a few small, flattened, pigmented growths."
- 1878 – Legg [6] observed that the left pleura was free whereas the right exhibited many new growths. As for the peritoneum, there were also numerous new growths.
- 1889 – Moore [7] mentioned that the peritoneum showed numerous minute specks of growth.
- 1891 – Mackenzie [8] was expansive thus:
  - (i) The visceral and costal pleurae together are studded with dirty-white or greyish-black, firm, circumscribed, warty-looking nodules, from the size of a pin-head to that of a large pea. These are sometimes met with in clusters of a few together.
  - (ii) The entire surface of the abdominal peritoneum is as if it were thickly sprinkled with black, hard, warty-looking nodules, varying in size from a millet-seed to a bean.
- 1894 – Beadles [9] was thorough thus:

Peritoneum– Much straw-coloured fluid existed in the peritoneal cavity. A number of small growths sprang from the peritoneal

covering of the anterior abdominal wall. There was a cluster of these to the right of the middle line a short distance above the pubes, which were pedunculated. A large mass was found behind the right inguinal canal, as well as at a little higher level, just behind the anterior superior iliac spine. The latter was as large as a duck's egg. A similar sized mass, breaking down, was behind the left anterior superior iliac spine.

- 1898 – Calvert and Pigg [10] combined to describe with nicety as follows: The pleura– On the visceral pleurae were many deeply pigmented growths, flat and circular like a button; some of them were pedunculated. A few similar growths were on the parietal pleura.

### Discussion

Measurement means much. Alas! During the yester years, the medical masters were prone to use not the inch, let alone the centimeter, but the size of local products. Thus, in the present paper, the examples were in terms of farm-yard and home-stead items, namely, pin-head, pea, millet-seed, bean, duck's egg and button. However, the above findings have nicely antedated the ongoing progress being made in understanding the pathology of melanoma [11]. Indeed, much work is even going on concerning the molecular and genetic diversity in the metastatic process of melanoma [12].

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