

The Spread of Melanoma to the Breasts: Historical Notes

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Abstract

Much as the breast is notorious for its metastasis proneness, being the site of metastasis itself is uncommon. Certainly, it was not mentioned in a recent historical review of pigment cell biology. Therefore, this paper recalls a few cases described in the *Transactions of the Pathological Society of London*. This began to publish in 1846-1848, while the name melanoma, entered the English language in 1838.

Keywords: Cancer; Melanoma; Breast; Metastasis; History

Introduction

Breast cancer is known for its proneness to metastasize. In fact, this has made it the topmost killer among women [1]. In sharp contrast, the literature on it as a recipient of metastasis is shallow [2]. Certainly, the historical review of pigment cell biology does not mention it [3]. Therefore, this paper exemplifies some cases from the *Transactions of the Pathological Society of London* which started publishing in 1846-1848 [4]. I happened to stock them and other works in my mini Library. These have facilitated my historical contributions to the literature such as the paper on the regression of cancer of the breast from 1753-1897 [5].

Historical Texts

The breast was noted by Beadles [6] to have been barely involved as follows:

Five small nodules were situated in the skin above the right breast and a rather larger one above and to the outer side of the left breast.

Sanderson [7] mentioned that, concerning the breast, he found them thus- Both were hard and contracted and around their margins were numerous black masses of various sizes, similar to those which were found in other parts and perfectly separable from the substance of the gland.

Legg [8] supplied a two-fold description. On the one hand, he wrote: "The breasts are shriveled, but full of nodules, the size of filberts and smaller." On the other hand, he was also expansive.

The left breast is full of small, white, new growths; many are coloured brown, others very deeply so, almost black. The new growths in the right breast are much smaller, about the size of pins heads, but there are two or three the size of pigeons eggs, highly pigmented and one is breaking down apparently from the presence of blood.

Discussion

The second paper [9] carried by the First Volume of Transactions of the Pathological Society of London made it possible for me to publish the early case of cancer to cancer metastasis. Thus, I recounted how a pale primary renal cancer contained in its depths the coloured melanoma secondary [10].

Such present day publications are in concert with the opinion of the famous German pathologist, Julius Cohnheim [11], to the effect that the findings at autopsy "are all in a manner experiments instituted by nature, which we need rightly interpret to get a clear idea of the

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causes, laws of growth and significance of the tumour.”

In this context, the present quoted texts reveal not only simultaneous arrival of the metastases at the breast but also discordant such arrivals. To conclude, such nuances are helpful in the present day pursuit of the principles of metastasis [12].

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