

## A Brief History of the Spread of Melanoma to the Pancreas

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### Abstract

The informative Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary not only defined melanoma as a tumor which forms pigment but also added that this name first appeared in 1838. In this context, a historical review of pigment cell biology did not mention the pancreas up to 1900. Therefore, this paper briefly documents its appearances before that year.

**Keywords:** Pancreas; Melanoma; Spread; History

### Introduction

The Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary defined "melanoma" as a tumor that forms pigment characteristically; it was also one which was first described in 1838 [1]. Therefore, what has transpired between 1838 and 1900? In sum, Nordlund's associates did not answer that question with "THE EARLIEST STUDIES: PRE-1900 [2]. Accordingly, this paper considers the pancreas which was missing in their account.

### Historical Texts

In 1846, Holmes Coote [3], surgeon to the North London Ophthalmic Institution wrote massively on the melanoma. The deposits were thoughtfully described thus:

Melanotic tumours, then, do not consist of an unorganized deposit; the cells have their periods of growth, maturity, and decay; neither can they be regarded as mere accumulations of pigment, for the cells have a totally different form from those of healthy choroid.

He explained that upon examining a case after death, melanotic matter is found accumulated in every part of the body, except, perhaps, the cornea, synovial membranes, and tendinous structures. This list implies that the pancreas must be one of those parts attacked in general. Blumer [4] described such a generalized case of melanotic tumor. However, he was actually hesitant as follows: "There were one or two small nodules in the pancreas."

More precise was Mackenzie [5]. He described his case thus: Pancreas looks ragged and atrophied, and is thickly studded with rounded and flattened greyish-black, solid, circumscribed nodules varying from the size of hazel-nut to that of a pin-point. On section they are cheesy-white, and most numerous and largest in and about the head. They invade and narrow the lumen of the duct.

Sanderson [6] was brief as follows: "Pancreas - In the centre of this organ was a black mass as large as a hazel-nut."

Broader were the findings of Beadles [7]: Pancreas - There were two deposits within the pancreas; both were about three quarters of an inch in diameter, firm, and of a much paler colour than the gland itself, but

they did not seem as distinct from the gland tissue as those in other organs. They were over three inches apart.

Over the years, some authors listed the pancreas as a colonization ground. In sum, in chronological order, these were Ogle, Rolleston, and Calvert and Pigg [8-10].

By way of exception, the pancreas was necessarily not invaded in the case reported by Payne [11], seeing that he wrote that "The only internal viscera which contained any tumours were the lungs and liver." Incidentally, in terms of lone two-some combination of involved organs, Moore [12] noted that of liver and the pancreas itself.

It is of interest that some authors took the trouble to mention cases in which the pancreas was notably free of melanotic deposits. Thus as Sanderson averred "Stomach and pancreas normal" [13]. Moreover, maintaining of this natural status was confirmed by Coupland and Legg [14,15].

### Discussion

Elsewhere, I showed on historical grounds that the medial masters of yester years believed that Nature shows her footsteps clearly when autopsies were nicely carried out. In the present paper, it is apparent that they tended to include even minutiae in their descriptions of melanoma spreading to the pancreas [16]. Thus, Beadle [7] went to the trouble of distinguishing between the colours in the pancreas itself and that of the other attacked organs. Incidentally, in those pre-metric measurement days, their choices of size varied among named vegetable matters like hazel-nut [5,6].

### Conclusion

It was admitted that "Very conflicting statements are made concerning the relative frequency of melanotic sarcoma in the various organs." This was the conclusion of Calvert and Pigg [10]. They calculated the records in the Transactions of the Pathological Society and found: liver, 19; heart, 13; lungs, 12; kidney, 9; pleura, 6; and pancreas, 6; etc. Moreover, they declared that "the specimens shown at the meeting were fixed in formalin and mounted in glycerine - a process begun at St. Bartholomew's and introduced into England by Dr. Kanchack." In conclusion, such progress diligently made before

1900 were the first steps taken before the recent progress growing in our understanding of the pathology of malignant melanoma [16].

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