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GASTRIC AUTOIMMUNITY IN ADDISONIAN PERNICIOUS ANEMIA

AND STUDIES OF HUMAN INTRINSIC FACTOR SECRETION

by

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
THESIS SUMMARY .. .. .	1
Advances in Knowledge Resulting from this Thesis .. .. .	5
Acknowledgements .. .. .	7
INTRODUCTION	
Pernicious Anemia and the Stomach - Historical Aspects .. .. .	9
PART ONE - LITERATURE REVIEW	
The Immunological Phenomena in Pernicious Anemia .. .. .	16
Pernicious Anemia and Endocrine Disease ..	22
Corticosteroids and their Effect on the Stomach in Pernicious Anemia .. .. .	28
Autodigestion of Vitamin B <sub>12</sub> Binders in Human Gastric Juice .. .. .	33
Techniques of Intra-gastric Neutralization in Man and Gastric Volume Markers .. .. .	37
The Gastric Secretion of Vitamin B <sub>12</sub> Binders and Pepsinogen in Man .. .. .	40
Aims of Present Studies .. .. .	44

SECTION I	Correlation of systemic and local autoimmune reactions with gastric structure and function in pernicious anemia.	
Materials and Methods	.. .. .	46
Results	.. .. .	55
SECTION II	Polyendocrine failure and pernicious anemia.	
Case Reports	.. .. .	77
Case 1	.. .. .	77
Case 2	.. .. .	79
Immunological Studies	.. .. .	81
SECTION III	The response of the human stomach to corticosteroids. Studies in normal subjects, in patients with chronic superficial gastritis and in pernicious anemia.	
Materials and Methods	.. .. .	84
Results	.. .. .	89
The Effect of Prednisolone on Gastric Function and Structure in Normal Subjects	.. .. .	91
The Effect of Prednisolone in Patients with Pernicious Anemia	.. .. .	103

	PAGE
SECTION IV A study of vitamin B <sub>12</sub> binding proteins in human gastric juice. Autodigestive influences.	
Materials and Methods .. .. .	123
Results .. .. .	126
SECTION V A new method for continuous intragastric neutralization in man. Assessment of secretion rates by the use of inorganic phosphate as a volume marker.	
Validation of Inorganic Phosphate as a Volume Marker .. .. .	135
The Formulation of Secretory Volume ..	139
SECTION VI The gastric secretion of vitamin B <sub>12</sub> binding proteins and pepsinogen in normal subjects.	
Materials and Methods .. .. .	142
Results .. .. .	145
SECTION VII Discussion of experimental findings and conclusions.	
The Immunological Phenomena in Pernicious Anemia .. .. .	151
Pernicious Anemia and Polyendocrine Deficiency	160
The Effects of Corticosteroids on the Stomach of Normal Subjects and Patients with Pernicious Anemia .. .. .	163
Autodigestion of Vitamin B <sub>12</sub> Binders in Human Gastric Juice .. .. .	174

	PAGE
Continuous Intra-gastric Neutralization in Man. Validation of Inorganic Phosphate as a Gastric Marker .. .. .	176
Gastric Secretion of Vitamin B <sub>12</sub> Binders and Pepsinogen in Man .. .. .	178

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

Personal .. .. .	182
General .. .. .	184

THESIS SUMMARY

Of all the diseases of man in which autoimmune phenomena occur pernicious anemia offers perhaps the best opportunities for correlated studies of the presence of antibodies in serum, glandular secretion, and tissue with morphology and secretory activity of the involved organ, namely the stomach.

Such a study is presented in this thesis and has established that in addition to circulating gastric autoantibodies, local gastric autoimmune phenomena occur with high frequency in this disease. A higher incidence of intrinsic factor antibodies in gastric juice than in serum and a striking incidence of IgA parietal cell antibody in gastric juice compared to serum, together with the presence of gastric autoantibody containing cells in the gastric mucosa strengthen the possibility that an immunodestructive gastritis forms the basis of pernicious anemia. Comparison of these phenomena with structural and functional data has not provided sufficient evidence to implicate the autoantibodies themselves directly in the evolution of the disease.

A case study of two adults with pernicious anemia and polyendocrine deficiency in addition to emphasizing the clinical interrelationships between gastric and endocrine disease has demonstrated the probable interplay between immunologic and genetic

factors in the pathogenesis of these disorders and has indicated that the evolution of autoimmune organ damage may be extremely prolonged.

A study of the effect of corticosteroids in pernicious anemia confirms the results of investigations published in the course of the present studies. The influence of these drugs in restoring vitamin B<sub>12</sub> absorption to normal levels has been shown to be specific to patients with advanced atrophic gastritis as no effect on vitamin B<sub>12</sub> absorption or intrinsic factor secretion was observed in normal subjects or in those with chronic superficial gastritis, taking prednisolone. Though regeneration of parietal cells was seen in some patients such changes could not always be linked to the improvement in vitamin B<sub>12</sub> absorption. A unique series of short term studies of the influence of prednisolone in pernicious anemia disclosed that the improvement in vitamin B<sub>12</sub> absorption took at least one week to appear and contrary to other reports was not invariably accompanied by enhanced intrinsic factor output. The first study of the influence of corticosteroids on gastric juice intrinsic factor antibodies is presented. Despite a correlation between functional improvement and the existence of serum or gastric juice intrinsic factor antibodies an immunosuppressive effect in gastric juice could not be demonstrated.

Acid secretion was shown to be significantly enhanced in normal subjects taking oral prednisolone but the mechanism of this effect could not be discerned from this study.

Physiological studies of the gastric secretion of vitamin B<sub>12</sub> binding proteins in man have established that proteolysis indeed has a marked depressive effect on the quantitation of these components as measured by the widely used immunoassay procedure.

A method of overcoming intragastric proteolysis yet retaining the capacity to measure actual secretion rates of macromolecular constituents has been developed and successfully applied to a study of the secretion of vitamin B<sub>12</sub> binding proteins and pepsinogen in normal subjects.

Demonstration of the pattern of secretion of these components under maximal stimulation has been thereby achieved under optimal conditions. The results lend strong support for the gastric parietal cell being the cell of origin of intrinsic factor in man.

Several noteworthy methodological advances have resulted from these studies. A method for quantifying gastric juice constituents by the use of inorganic phosphate as a volume marker whilst maintaining the gastric juice pH close to pH 7.0 by in vivo



neutralization is described and may have wider application in the study of gastric juice macromolecular components. Improved techniques for the collection and handling of pernicious anemia gastric juice for immunological testing, a modification of the guinea pig mucosal homogenate method for detecting gastric juice intrinsic factor antibodies and a technique using labelled crude gastric antigens to localize antibody producing cells to these antigens are described.