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Title

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Journal

Dermatology Online Journal, 24(7)

Authors

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Publication Date

2018

DOI

10.5070/D3247040914

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Darier Nests or Pautrier microabscesses: highlighting the confusion of a decade

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Abstract

Lucien Marie Pautrier was a skilled dermatologist whose work led to the creation of numerous manuscripts within the field of dermatology. His name, though, most often lends itself to a histopathological finding that was not his own discovery. For years, the origin of the term **“pautrier microabscess”** was thought to be the result of a misattribution by Louis H. Winer at the 66th annual meeting of the American Dermatological Association in 1946. However, a recently reported citing of the term in a 1932 article has led to speculation that the term could, in fact, have been first coined at a meeting of the New York Society of Dermatology in 1927.

Keywords: Lucien Marie Pautrier, Pautrier microabscess

Body of Article

Lucien Marie Pautrier was a brilliant dermatologist and a skilled musician. Throughout his lifetime, he contributed to the production of seven large volumes of manuscripts. He was also responsible for opening several hospitals that provided care to the most vulnerable of patients, including countless refugees, following the outbreak of World War II [1]. Ironically, however, his name is most often associated in American literature with a histopathologic finding that was not his own discovery.

“Pautrier microabscess,” which refers to the histological finding of enlarged atypical T-lymphocytes forming aggregates within the

epidermis, is considered to be a pathognomonic feature of mycosis fungoides. The eponym first appeared in American dermatological literature in 1932, with no reference to its etymology [2]. In truth, **it was actually Jean Ferdinand Darier, the “father of modern dermatology of France”** who first described the pathologic findings back in 1887 [2]. Between 1887 and 1932, the characteristic sign was referenced in both American and French literature under a different, and perhaps more historically accurate term: **“Darier epidermal nests”** [2].

The cause for the name change had been a mystery, even to Pautrier himself, who openly recognized Darier for his discovery. For years, it was believed that the American dermatologist, Louis H. Winer, was responsible for first coining the misattributed term during a presentation at the 66th annual meeting of the American Dermatological Association in 1946 [3]. However, a more recent commentary by Dr. Cribier highlighted the reference to the eponym in a 1932 article [2]. In an attempt to reconcile the time disparity, Cribier points to a meeting of the New York Society of Dermatology in 1927, of which Pautrier was an invited guest. During the meeting, the physician, Fred Wise, was noted to have presented a **case of mycosis fungoides. Given Pautrier’s extensive knowledge of the condition, it is plausible that he elaborated upon the characteristic histopathology. It might have then followed that a member of the audience later recounted the discussion and erroneously attributed Pautrier with the discovery.**

It is interesting to note that the term “pautrier microabscess” has never been used within French

manuscripts [1]. Although the individual responsible for the name change within American literature may never be identified, attempts to correct the

misnomer have been made. Many now refer to the pathognomonic finding as Pautrier-*Darier's microabscesses*.

References

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