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Inter-rater concordance of basal cell carcinoma subtypes: influences on reporting format and opportunities for further classification modifications.

Conference/Meeting Name: American Society of Dermatopathology 59th Annual Meeting

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Presentation Type: Oral presentation



Myself, and Dr Klaus Busam, Professor of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine, and Director of the Dermatopathology Service, Memorial Sloan Kettering, New York; President-Elect, American Society of Dermatopathology, author of textbooks and leading publications in the field of melanocytic pathology. We got to chat in both English and German (languages we share).

I was exceedingly grateful to have this opportunity to attend the American Society of Dermatopathology 59th annual meeting. This is a leading large conference in this field, attracting a diverse range of well-known USA speakers covering a breadth of topics related to dermatopathology (including nail disorders, artificial intelligence, skin lymphomas, molecular advances, melanoma-related pathology, and legal aspects to care).

The Hermann Pinkus Memorial basic science course this year had a theme of 'From Pixels to Probes: Dermatopathology on the Cusp of Transformation' and featured interesting lectures on digital pathology, artificial intelligence and new non-invasive imaging technologies including confocal microscopy and optical coherence tomography.

I think the topic of how to interpret challenging melanocytic tumours (melanoma and its mimics) received considerable attention during the meeting. The topic of PRAME (preferentially expressed antigen in melanoma) immunohistochemistry received some discussion. This marker has been heralded as a potential way of helping to distinguish melanoma from its benign mimics (nevi/moles) over the last 5 years (approximately). However, as the meeting highlighted, sometimes benign melanocytic tumours express PRAME, and therefore PRAME needs to be interpreted in the context of the morphology. The meeting discussed the use of other established and emerging molecular techniques (such as FISH, CGH/SNP array, and NGS, as well as the commercially available gene expression panels), when trying to interpret a difficult melanocytic tumour, which was insightful.

I think the overall key take home message from the meeting for me, was the importance of clinicopathological correlation. As one of the presenters, Dr Adam Rubin, an international expert in nail pathology said, 'the more I do nail pathology, the more I lean on the clinical'. This clinicopathological correlation was emphasised not just during melanocytic tumour lectures, but also in the context of making a cutaneous lymphoma diagnosis. As an example of this, the speakers emphasized the importance of understanding if a skin lesion had a persistent and progressive course, or a relapsing/remitting course (because if it had the later, the behaviour would not be consistent with a cutaneous lymphoma). This was highlighted by examples where skin lymphomas and pseudolymphomas can be difficult/impossible to reliably distinguish pathologically, and clinical correlation proved essential to clinch the diagnosis. A need to increase the use of T cell receptor markers (such as TCR beta-F1 and/or delta H-41) in classic mycosis fungoides cases was also brought up, to help us better understand and define mycosis fungoides.

I also met several world leading surgical pathologists, including Dr Klaus Busam (Memorial Sloan Kettering Hospital, New York), Dr Aleodor (Doru) Andrea (University of Michigan, Ann Arbor), Dr Jerad Gardner (Geisinger Medical Center, Danville, Pennsylvania), and Dr Iwei Yeh (University of California, San Francisco, San Francisco), along with many other leading and inspirational pathologists. I had previously referenced Dr Busam's and Dr Yeh's work during research projects, and it was great to put faces to the names. Collaborative opportunities were opened during several conversations with attendees.

The knowledge I acquired here will be invaluable to our current projects, which include a digital slide workflow for skin and melanoma specimens at the Melanoma Institute Australia. I was able to have a helpful conversation with Dr Raj Singh, the co-founder of PathPresenter, regarding options to facilitate a highly efficient digital slide workflow for research purposes. Furthermore, as I commence research into AI use in pathology in 2023, it was invaluable to have an overview of the current state of the field from leading experts.

Additionally, I was able to present my research on BCC subtype classification challenges, during which time I proposed further modifications to the current WHO classification of BCC subtypes, and a way in which BCC would be better reported for clinical care. With a large audience, this provided opportunities to hear feedback on these suggestions, which all were positive. This gives me confidence as I move forward with publishing this research, and increases the likelihood of having these evidence-based, clinically translatable suggestions incorporated into routine surgical pathology practice.

A personal highlight was trying deep-dish pizza, a famous Chicago speciality. Also, the weather was spectacular – blue skies and warm, which apparently wasn't normal for this time of year, and made the walk along the river to the conference venue each day very enjoyable.

I'm very grateful to Sydney Cancer Partners support in facilitating my attendance at this conference.