

## Oral Hairy Leukoplakia

Sir,

Reggiani & Pauluzzi reported a case of oral hairy leukoplakia in a liver transplant patient (1). Although hairy leukoplakia was first described exclusively in patients infected with the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), the virus was never found in the lesions, but the absence of Langerhans' cells indicates a dysfunction of the immune system (2). On the other hand, Epstein-Barr virus (EBV) is a regular finding and hairy leukoplakia is considered today to be an opportunistic infection of the tongue by EBV (2). Since EBV can be found in oropharyngeal excretions in immunosuppressed as well as in healthy people (3) and EBV receptors are present in the parakeratinized oral mucosa (4), it is not surprising that several cases of hairy leukoplakia in immunosuppressed patients without evidence for HIV infection have been reported recently (Table I)

(5-9). However, EBV-DNA has never been detected in hairy leukoplakia-like lesions in individuals without immunosuppression (10). Therefore, in individuals lacking evidence of HIV infection, hairy leukoplakia-like lesions should be confirmed by detection of EBV-DNA.

### REFERENCES

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Table I. Oral hairy leukoplakia-like lesions in HIV-negative patients

Author	Immunosuppression	Histology	EBV-DNA <sup>a</sup>
Birek (8)	Bone marrow transplantation	+	+
Epstein (9)	Bone marrow transplantation	+	nd
Green-span (6)	Renal transplantation	+	+
Itin (5)	Renal transplantation	+	+
Reggiani (1)	Liver transplantation	nd	nd
Syrjänen (7)	Chemotherapy (leukemia)	+	+

<sup>a</sup>EBV-DNA detected by in situ hybridization, nd: not done.

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