Contents

883 Mammary Neoplastic Response of Lewis and Sprague-Dawley Female Rats to 7,12-Dimethyl-benz(a)anthracene or X-ray. Claire J. Shellabarger.

886 Increased Activity of Polynucleotide Ligase from Rat Hepatoma Induced by N-2-Fluorenyl-acetamide. Kinji Tsukada, Shigeru Hokari, Nobuko Hayasaki, and Nobuyuki Ito.


898 The Immunogenic Activity of Tumor Antigens Retained by the Reticuloendothelial Cells of Tumor-bearing Mice. Jan Vaage.


908 Malignant Tumors in Rats Given Lasiocarpine. Donald J. Svoboda and Janardan K. Reddy.


921 Unexpected Toxicity in Patients Treated with Iphosphamide. Jacobus J. van Dyk, Hendre C. Falkson, Alma M. van der Merwe, and Geoffrey Falkson.

925 Studies on Nucleoli and Cytoplasmic Fibrillar Bodies of Human Hepatocellular Carcinomas. Karel Smetana, Ferenc Gyorkey, Phyllis Gyorkey, and Harris Busch.

Johannes Müller (1801—1858), one of the fountainheads of modern medicine, was born in Coblenz, Germany. He received his M.D. from the University of Bonn in 1822 and practiced as a physician for only a short period before pursuing an academic career. He was professor of pathology, physiology, and comparative anatomy at the University of Berlin until his retirement. In Müller’s early work, he recognized the similarity between cells previously observed in plants and those which he observed in animals (Vergleichendes Anatomie der Myxinoiden, Berlin, 1835), thus introducing into biology the cell concept heretofore applied to botany. His greatest contribution is that in which he demonstrated the harmony between the pathological and the embryonic development of tumors (Ueber den feineren Bau und die Formen der Krankhaften Geschwulste. Berlin: G. Reimer, 1838). Müller founded the Archiv für Anatomie, Physiologie, und Wissenschaftliche Medicin, later known as Müller’s Archiv, in 1834. He received the Copley Medal of the Royal Society of London.

Among Müller’s followers were Brücke, Du Bois Reymond, Helmholtz, Kölliker, Henle, and especially Schwann, who at Müller’s suggestion started his classic work on the cellular character of animal tissues, and Virchow, the father of cellular pathology, who was one of his students. Virchow wrote of his teacher’s influence, “they [more youger men early learned to think in terms of cellularity.” (R. Virchow, Virchow Arch. Pathol. Anat., 87: 389, 1882, from Hans G. Schmidtberger, Origins of the Cell Concept in Pathology, Arch. Pathol., 37: 396—407, 1944.)

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He is shown on the cover in an 1858 photograph which was kindly supplied by Dr. Peter Olch, National Library of Medicine, Bethesda, Maryland. The cancer cells are sketched after Figs. 6 and 7 of Müller’s first work, which contains the first reproduction of cancer cells. The original figures are supplied through the courtesy of the New York Academy of Medicine Library.

Strongly built, with broad shoulders, and a massive Achillean head, Müller was a striking, magnetic, impressive teacher of rare personal charm. [Details are from F. H. Garrison. An Introduction to the History of Medicine. Ed. 4 (reprinted), pp. 451—453. Philadelphia: W. B. Saunders Co., 1929.]

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32 (5)


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