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The Terminologia Histologica after 10 years: Inconsistencies, mistakes, and new proposals

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Abstract

This article details our experience with the Terminologia Histologica (TH) and its utility in the teaching of histology, cytology, and clinical medicine (e.g., pathology and hematology). Latin histological nomenclature has been used for 43 years, and the latest version of the TH has been in use for 15 years (although it was only issued publicly within the past 10 years). The following findings and ensuing proposals allow us to discuss key points pertaining to the TH and make important suggestions for potential changes to the TH (such as the exclusion and inclusion of various terms). We classify these changes into six groups: 1.) mistakes in the TH, 2.) discrepancies among various Terminologiae, 3.) discrepancies within the TH, 4.) the repetition of terms, 5.) synonyms in the TH, and 6.) missing terms in the TH. Surprisingly, unlike the anatomical nomenclature, the histological nomenclature has been neglected in the literature. This article addresses this problem by reviewing and summarizing the state of this field, pointing out key discrepancies, offering solutions, and highlighting topics for further discussion.

Keywords: histology; terminology; nomenclature; histological terminology; histological nomenclature; Terminologia Histologica

1. Introduction

A common language is necessary for clear communication outside and within a scientific field. Terminology comprises all the terms used in a field, and nomenclature is usually developed within this framework. Histology is a methodology used in the field of morphology, and it developed as a way of better examining anatomy following the invention of light microscopy. New terminology began to arise with the publication of the first articles describing the “microworld,” which were authored by Antonie van Leewenhoek in the Netherlands in the 1670’s (Anderson, 2014). Another important milestone was the discovery of the electron microscope by German scientists, Ernst Ruska and Max Knoll, in the 1930’s. Electron microscopy facilitated the expansion of cytological terminology as new cells and intracellular structures were discovered. Thus, histological terminology is quite old, and it has formed the basis for the development of several medical disciplines, such as pathology,

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