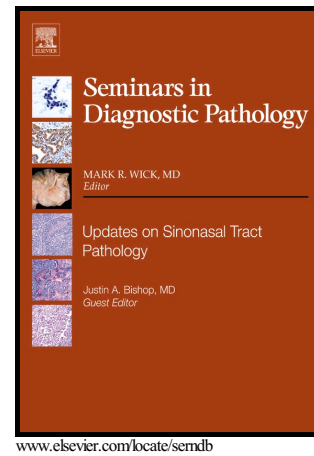


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A pattern-based approach to reactive lymphadenopathies

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Abstract

A crucial task in histopathological examination of enlarged lymph nodes is to discriminate malignant from benign processes. The central importance of this issue is reflected by the fact that benign lymphadenopathies mistaken for lymphomas belong to the most commonly misdiagnosed cancers. In addition, recognition of distinct histopathological patterns of reactive lymph node changes narrow down the potential number of causative agents, especially of those that can be specifically identified by means of often very resource consuming ancillary techniques; thus, the more precise the differential diagnosis established upon histopathological examination is, the more targetable and efficient the application of these techniques will be. This review provides a synopsis on a histopathological pattern-based approach towards reactive lymphadenopathies.

Key words

lymphadenopathy, reactive lymph node changes, histopathology, patterns

Introduction

Histopathological examination of enlarged lymph nodes is the gold standard to discriminate benign from malignant conditions causing lymphadenopathy (LA). This procedure is challenging to patients, their physicians, including those obtaining tissue for examination, and the surgical pathologist. The latter must be aware of the spectrum of non-neoplastic conditions, especially those mimicking lymphomas, that can affect lymph nodes as well as of those that are specific for a distinct cause (e.g. specific infection) to guide proper clinical decisions. The crucial importance of this is impressively illustrated by the fact that lymphomas, including benign LA mistaken for lymphomas, are thought to be the most common misdiagnosed cancers (1).

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