Measurement of changes in the microvasculature

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This inexpensive instrument was designed to record *in vivo* any changes in a microvessel which would result in a change of optical density, e.g. alteration of vessel diameter, white thrombus formation, white cell rolling.

The apparatus consists of an optical adaptor, photocell and amplifier (Figure 1). It can be used in normal daylight with any research microscope having a phototube and a magnification factor of up to 100-350 x and a tungsten light source.

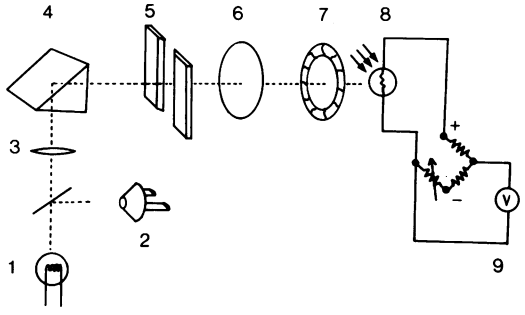

Figure 1

1. Tungsten light source
2. Binocular viewing tube
3. Phototube lens
4. Prism
5. Adjustable knife edge
6. Ground glass screen
7. Adjustable iris diaphragm
8. Photocell
9. Pen recorder

The optical adaptor consists of a prism attached above the projecting eyepiece of a standard Leitz camera tube. The beam is turned through 90° and projected onto a small ground glass viewing screen. A CdS photocell (cadmium sulpho selenide photoconductive cell – Mullard RPY 33) is placed in front of the screen after the experiment has been set up. To reduce glare and increase contrast, an optical knife edge is placed behind the screen and an iris diaphragm in front. Manipulation of the masks enables a square or rectangle to be formed. The photocell is recessed into a black perspex disc and when placed into position excludes all extraneous light. The experiment can be monitored using the binocular viewing head of the microscope. The pen recorder can be calibrated by aligning the vessel with the graticules in the eye-piece and on the ground glass screen.

The high sensitivity CdS photoconductive cell used is connected to a Wheatstone bridge circuit. The circuit is adjusted to a zero balance with a multi-turn potentiometer and balance meter. A local variation of light intensity results in a conductivity change in the photocell which unbalances the bridge circuit and produces an output voltage in excess of 50 mV at 2.5 kΩ impedance. The voltage is then filtered out with an RC filter and recorded on a continuous potentiometric pen recorder.

This work was partly supported by a grant from Ciba/Geigy Ltd.

A simple perfusion system for the study of histamine release from rat peritoneal mast cells

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Rat mast cells are extensively used to investigate the processes involved with the release of inflammatory mediators from cells. In the present study, a simple and rapid perfusion technique has been developed for the determination of histamine release from rat peritoneal mast cells.

Mast cells were obtained by gentle lavage of the rat peritoneal cavity with 12 ml of a modified buffer solution at pH 7 (Uvnäs & Thon, 1961) containing bovine serum albumin (0.1% w/v). The solution was withdrawn from the cavity and stored on ice until required. Aliquots (1-4 ml) were passed through a nylon membrane (duralon, 1 μm pore size) encased in a millipore filter-holder (Swinnex-25). A heating jacket was used to control the temperature of the filter-holder. In 20 experiments, the histamine content of the perfusate, before and after filtration, was comparable (within 5.8 ± 2.9%, mean ± s.e. mean), suggesting that this procedure did not disrupt the cells. Further, comparison of the total histamine content of the perfusate (using 0.4 *N* perchloric acid to disrupt any cells present) indicated that over 90% of the mast cells were trapped on the