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Reply to Seifert

We thank Dr. Seifert for his interest in our report. We agree that adenomyoepithelioma of the breast and epithelial-myoepithelial carcinoma of the salivary glands are almost identical tumours. It is likely that the difference in biological behaviour between these tumours is at least in part due to the greater ease of a more complete excision of the mammary lesions. This probably also explains the apparently less aggressive behaviour of mammary adenoid cystic carcinoma. Tavassoli [5] reported differences in GFAP reactivity in the myoepithelial component of the two tumours; the myoepithelial cells in salivary gland epithelial-myoepithelial carcinomas sometimes stain for GFAP, whereas the myoepithelial cells in breast adenomyoepitheliomas do not. This is not surprising, considering the normal differences in GFAP immunoreactivity in nonneoplastic salivary gland and breast myoepithelial cells.

It should be remembered before studies with sufficient follow-up were available, epithelial-myoepithelial carcinoma of the salivary glands was often considered a benign neoplasm and adenomyoepithelioma and clear cell adenoma are terms that have been used for this lesion [1, 4]. Insight into the biological behaviour of adenomyoepithelioma of the breast has a history that is remarkably similar to that of epithelial-myoepithelial carcinoma of the salivary glands. The occurrence of this tumour in the breast was described and illustrated for the first time by Hamperl in 1970, as an "adenomyoepithelioma" [2], at a time when the term epithelial-myoepithelial carcinoma had not been introduced for the salivary gland counterpart. Initial reports confirmed the benign nature of adenomyoepithelioma of the breast, and the term (epithelial-myoepithelial) carcinoma did not seem applicable. However, later reports [3, 6] have confirmed the malignant nature of some adenomyoepitheliomas and have made the parallel with salivary gland epithelial-myoepithelial carcinoma more obvious.

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We agree that all attempts to use a simple and homogeneous terminology should be encouraged and that the terms epithelial-myoepithelial adenoma and epithelial-myoepithelial carcinoma can be used for adenomyepithelioma and malignant adenomyoepithelioma of the breast, respectively. The terms adeno-myoepithelioma (combination of adenoma and myoepithelioma) and epithelial-myoepithelial adenoma, and malignant adeno-myoepithelioma and epithelial-myoepithelial carcinoma have exactly the same meaning.

References

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