nerve fiber bundles may proceed unimpeded into the more superficial wing cell layers before branching into thinner nerve strands. Additionally, nerves observed in the epithelium appeared to follow a course adjacent to areas of basal and wing cells with abnormally reflective cytoplasm; extracellular edema or a breakdown of intercellular adhesion may have provided a further path of decreased resistance to direct aberrant nerve growth. Dendritic cells in the basal epithelium appeared in 2 of 4 affected individuals, indicating possible immune activity. As the small intercellular epithelial deposits observed in the present family were not visible with the slitlamp, it is unclear whether these corresponded to the "punctate epithelial opacities" observed by others.2,4 Interestingly, the deposits were also found in the unaffected individual. These deposits may be dendritic cells additionally present within the wing cell layers; however, it is unclear whether their presence is disease related, as a sparse distribution of dendritic cells is sometimes observed in the central cornea of healthy individuals.

Notably, we did not detect peripheral corneal opacities or the "cornea verticillata" observed by Blackman et al3; nevertheless, the epithelial edema and abnormal cellular adhesion they found in biopsy samples is consistent with the (somewhat milder) epithelial pathology and lesions observed in the central and peripheral cornea in the present family.

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Financial Disclosure: None reported.


OBITUARY

Rocko Fasanella, MD (1916-2009)

Rocko Fasanella, MD, the first full-time chief of ophthalmology at Yale University, has died at age 92 years. His textbook, Complications in Eye Surgery, was required reading in the 1960s and 1970s, and his Fasanella-Servat procedure for minimal ptosis remains a standard operation to this day.

As a native of Trenton, New Jersey, Dr Fasanella assumed he would attend nearby Princeton University, until a Yale representative visited his high school and “the rest is history.” He graduated from Yale College in 1939 and Yale Medical School in 1943. During medical school, he was part of a team that successfully administered penicillin for the first time in the United States. The patient was a young woman dying of septicemia following childbirth, and the irony is that she was the wife of the man who brought Dr Fasanella to Yale.

Following medical school, Dr Fasanella served in the medical corps of the US Army in France during World War II. He then returned to Yale for his ophthalmology residency; in 1951 at the age of 35 years, he was appointed chief of the Section of Ophthalmology, the youngest chief of any section at that time. Dr Fasanella laid a firm foundation for ophthalmology at Yale during his 10-year tenure, not only in his dedication to the finest qualities of our profession but also in the compassion and work ethic that he exemplified in his life.

Dr Fasanella was truly a renaissance man. He spoke several languages, enjoyed opera and other cultural activities, celebrated the culture of Italy, was an enthusiastic fisherman, and took up golf after retirement. He was also a man of deep faith and was devoted to his wife Marion, who predeceased him, and their 6 children and 4 grandchildren.

He was kind, gentle, and humble, as befits a giant of our profession.

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