

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

### Association of HLA-DR3 and Herpes Gestationis

Among the blistering subepidermic diseases with immunoglobulins and/or complement deposits in the basement membrane zone (BMZ): Bullous Pemphigoid (BP), Dermatitis Herpetiformis (DH) and Herpes Gestationis (HG), the last one is the less characterized condition. Classically, HG was considered a clinical variant of DH.

Since the immunopathological techniques have been applied for the study of blistering cutaneous diseases, the data recorded in HG (deposits of C3 and IgG in BMZ and a circulating factor fixing complement) fit in better with the pattern of BP (IgG and C3 deposits in MBZ) than with those of DH (IgA in MBZ). Some immunological diseases are related to the HLA system, especially with the DR locus, and DH is a DR3-related disease, as has been reported in four series of DH with a total of 166 patients (4). In DH patients, B8 antigen was found in a range of 79 to 85% (2) and in two of these series where DR locus was also studied, the DR3 had a range of 75 to 92%.

By contrast, the results of the HLA studies carried out in three BP series, including 60 patients (3, 4), were not significant—but neither was the DR locus analysed.

We studied the HLA, A, B, C and DR antigens in 8 patients with Herpes Gestationis. Six of them had DR3 (75%), while in a normal population the frequency of DR3 is 14.8% ( $p$  corrected  $<0.005$ ). The DR3 antigen was defined by sera McGoogan, Sommer, Fio 980 and P-984-I, highly correlated with the

workshop antisera. Not a single antigen of HLA A, B, or C loci was significantly increased.

The largest series of HG reported (1) included 11 cases, where the authors failed to demonstrate a consistent pattern of HLA type. However, they did not report whether or not a study of DR antigens was performed.

The fact that HG is linked to HLA DR3, which is mostly associated with autoimmune disorders, favours the hypothesis that the autoimmune component is an important factor in the pathogenesis of this disease. The association of HG and DH with DR3 suggests the theory that both diseases have a common genetic and pathogenic factor.

### REFERENCES

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