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**The Anatomical and Radiological Basis
of the Operation Extrafascial Excision of
the Rectum**

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Medicine,

The University of Auckland, 2000

Abstract

The operation of extrafascial excision dissects directly on the rectal fascia propria to remove the rectum and mesorectum within an intact fascial envelope. The studies contained in this thesis revolve around the recent finding that if a rectal cancer is contained within the fascia propria and the rectum is removed by extrafascial excision then local recurrence of the cancer will be exceptional. The thesis is presented in 4 parts as anatomical, radiological, clinical and operative sections.

Gross and microscopic examination of surgical specimens, post-mortem dissections and axial cross sectional anatomy images were used to define the anatomy of the fascia propria. It is shown to be a 150µm thick, collagen membrane completely surrounding the mesorectum. The hypogastric nerves and pelvic plexuses are embedded in the parietal fascia separated from the mesorectum and fascia propria by a loose areolar layer. A computerised three-dimensional model of the rectum and mesorectum has been generated based on 1mm axial cross sections of the anatomy of the area and axial MR scans offering the potential to visualise the rectum in its mesorectum preoperatively.

A systematic review of preoperative radiological staging has been reported comparing endorectal ultrasound, CT and MR imaging. The ability to determine the relation of the tumour to the fascia propria preoperatively has, however, not been previously explored. Cadaveric studies in this thesis have demonstrated that the fascia propria can be identified by axial CT and MR imaging. In a consecutive series of 43 patients with rectal cancer preoperative MR accurately predicted the relation of the deepest tumour invasion to this fascia.

In the third section extrafascial excision has been compared with conventional surgery at a single institution over a 16 year period. In a study population of 262 rectal cancer patients operated on with curative intent, extrafascial excision had a significantly lower local recurrence rate and prolonged cancer-free survival without an increase in cost or complication rates. Based on these studies a new description of the operation of extrafascial excision of the rectum is presented in the fourth section with emphasis on preventing complications.

This thesis has provided a new understanding of the surgical anatomy of the rectum and a novel management protocol for rectal cancer based on the relationship of the tumour to the fascia propria as detected by preoperative MR imaging.

Acknowledgments

This thesis could not have been produced without the assistance of many people. I am indebted to each of them in their encouragement, practical help, advice and friendship throughout the planning, research and writing.

Professor Graham Hill initially proposed the challenge of unravelling the anatomy of the fascia propria. He then provided regular, ongoing constructive supervision as the project expanded, never tiring of reading and rereading drafts of the individual manuscripts. Many of the ideas that led to the individual studies in the thesis were suggested by him and he has co-authored each of the publications.

Professor Bryan Parry invited me to join the team in the University Department of Surgery in Auckland in 1998. He provided an employment opportunity for me as a lecturer on my return from overseas. The confidence he placed in me spurred me on and kept me on track. He has shown supportive leadership and close friendship when I have needed it most. He is co-supervisor of the thesis providing advice, constructive criticism and practical help throughout.

Dr Kai Chau, Clinical Pathologist, carried out all the pathological examinations for the various studies with enthusiasm. We spent many hours over microscopes together and the pathological basis of the whole thesis has rested on his shoulders. He has been a very supportive colleague.

Dr Charitha Fernando and Dr David Hough, gastrointestinal radiologists, spent many hours reporting the CT and MR images that are an essential part of Section 2 of the thesis. Their insights shared at our weekly combined meetings have added greatly to our understanding of MR imaging in rectal cancer.

Dr Brett Cowan, cardiac MR physician, willingly offered advice and expertise concerning MR imaging. We together made many visits to the MR scanner as he helped to optimise the images we obtained (Chapters 4 and 5).

Dr Alistair Young, medical imaging engineer, advised and assisted in the three-dimensional reconstruction of images (Chapter 5).

Professor Stuart Heap, Professor of Radiology, and Mr. Mischel Neill, Colorectal Surgeon, gave input to our weekly combined clinical meetings and contributed insights to the discussion of the concepts involved in the project.

Henry Kwok, an Auckland medical student, carried out his summer studentship with me. He performed the initial literature search for the systematic review of radiological staging of rectal cancer and was co-author of that publication (Chapter 7).

Dr Glen McKay, a surgical trainee in Auckland, obtained the clinical records and performed the initial collection of data from charts for the comparative study reported in Chapter 10. He also assisted in the analysis of the results and co-authored this publication.

Dr Richard Flint, a surgical trainee in Auckland, wrote and distributed the nerve function questionnaire to rectal cancer patients (Chapter 10).

Michelle McAnulty-Smith, medical technologist, performed the preparation and staining of the slides in the anatomical study (Chapter 3).

Hilary Holloway, electron microscopist, undertook the electron microscopy of the fascia propria.

Mark Shelley, medical photographer, photographed the slides and specimens.

Arthur Ellis, medical illustrator, assisted in the production of the figures in Chapter 11. He was willing to redraw figures repeatedly in an attempt to best demonstrate our anatomical findings.

John Bodley, an engineering student, who, as part of his summer studentship project, wrote the programme for the reconstruction of the visible human cross sections as a 3 dimensional model and assisted in the production of the thesis compact disk (Chapter 5).

Andrea Zarcovic and Kenneth Wong, medical students, assisted in dissections during their surgical anatomy options papers (Chapters 4 and 8).

Diana Patience proof-read the text.

The Maurice and Phyllis Paykel Trust provided a funding grant that met most of the expenses involved in the anatomy studies in Section 1.

The Wellcome Trust funded the workstation that was used to generate the three-dimensional images of the fascia propria.

My wife, Johanna and children, Rebecca, Miriam, and Peter offered constant understanding and support in the many hours of research and writing involved in completing this thesis.

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Abbreviations

ACC – Accuracy
Ant R – Anterior resection
APR – Abdomino-perineal resection
°C – Degrees Celsius
cm – centimetres
CT – Computerised tomography
EFE – Extrafascial excision of the rectum
ES – Endorectal sonography
EVG – Verhoeff’s method with van Gieson counterstain
F – female
FP – fascia propria
Gy – Gray
H&E – Haematoxylin and Eosin
HN – Hypogastric nerve
IMA – Inferior mesenteric artery
M – male
ml – millilitres
mm – millimetres
MR – Magnetic resonance
MRI – Magnetic resonance image
NIH – National Institute of Health
NLR – Negative likelihood ratio
NPV – Negative predictive value
PLR – Positive likelihood ratio
PP – Pelvic plexus
PPV – Positive predictive value
S4 – Fourth sacral vertebrae
SD – Standard deviation
SEN – Sensitivity
SHP – Superior hypogastric plexus
SPE – Specificity
TME – Total mesorectal excision
TNM – Tumour, node, metastasis
UC – Ulcerative Colitis
UK – United Kingdom
µm – microns
USA - United States of America

