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ARE LYMPHATICS DIFFERENT FROM BLOOD VESSELS?

EPILOGUE

Let us return now to our starting point, the question "Are Lymphatics Different From Blood Vessels?". Symposiasts have answered "yes", "no", "maybe", but mainly "not fully known" reflecting the collective confusion and lack of understanding about both systems and their interrelationships in health and disease. Indeed, "lymphaticus" in Latin means "confused and distracted," an accurate portrayal of the current state of lymphologic ignorance. Clearly, we need to envision the microcirculation in a more inclusive scheme as a continuous circuit of liquid, solutes, macromolecules, particles, and migrating cells percolating from blood to tissues, staying awhile, and returning to receive and transmit physical and chemical messages. The integration of these messages maintain tissue homeostasis or, as Bede Morris points out, appropriately disturb it to produce "dystasis" or "heterostasis," recognized or unrecognized as disease or defense from disease. When any segment of this continuously circulating communication network is interrupted or distracted, the other elements are drawn into the fray to reverse or ameliorate the situation or else lead further to inexorable catastrophe.

This symposium today has delineated where we are now in exploring the interface and interrelationships between the blood and lymphatic vascular system. More than what we know, our collective ignorance should bind us together in a search for answers to fundamental questions about the microcirculation, the tissue microenvironment, and the clinical disturbances that result when these vital processes go awry.

M.H. Witte and C.L. Witte
Department of Surgery
University of Arizona College of Medicine
Tucson, Arizona, U.S.A.

Toshio Ohhashi
Department of Physiology
Shinshu University School of Medicine
Matsumoto, Japan