

## **Esthesioneuroepithelioma: a tumor of true olfactory epithelium origin**

### **An ultrastructural and immunohistochemical study**

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**Summary.** A case of esthesioneuroepithelioma was investigated ultrastructurally and immunohistochemically, using antibodies against neurofilament protein (NFP), glial fibrillary acidic protein (GFAP), keratin, neuron-specific enolase (NSE), S-100 protein (S-100), and tyrosine hydroxylase (TH). The tumor initially manifested as an epidural mass in the anterior cranial fossa in a 64-year-old man, and about 31/2 years later, autopsy further revealed extensive metastases to the lymph nodes of the neck and thoracic cavity. In the cranial and nasal cavities, the tumor was composed of fairly uniform, ill-defined cells arranged in nests which were surrounded by a fibrovascular stroma. These histological features were reproduced in the metastatic tumor nodules with frequent occurrence of tubular arrangements of the tumor cells. Ultrastructurally, two different cell types were well recognized by their characteristic morphological features, which were reminiscent of sensory neurons and sustentacular cells of the olfactory epithelium. No dense-cored secretory granules were observed in the tumor cells. Immunohistochemically, the tumor showed a variable number of cells positive for NFP, keratin, NSE and S-100. NFP was present in a relatively small number of cells, which were found diffusely in the nests. Keratin was observed in the cells mainly located at the periphery. NSE-positive cells tended to form irregular clusters in the center. A few S-100-positive cells were found, without any particular arrangement. These findings indicated that the present tumor, which actually arose in the superior nasal cavity, consisted of cells differentiating in at least two distinct directions, neuronal and epithelial, and strongly suggested that the tumor was of true olfactory epithelium origin, or more precisely, derived from the bipotential, undifferentiated basal cells of this epithelium.

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Olfactory neuroblastomas (esthesioneuroblastomas) are rare tumors that arise in the nasal cavity, most often superiorly and laterally near the ethmoidal sinus [29]. Although ultrastructural [5] and histochemical [14, 19] studies strongly suggest that they are apudomas [26] or neurocristomas [3] of neural crest origin, their histogenesis is still a matter of debate.

In 1981, however, Hassoun et al. [10] reported a tumor of the superior nasal cavity infiltrating the frontal lobe. The tumor was composed of compact lobules with tubular arrangements and ultrastructurally showed two different cell types, both devoid of neurosecretory granules and reminiscent of the sensory neurons and sustentacular cells of the olfactory epithelium. They concluded that their case, corresponding to a rare variant, the esthesioneuroepithelioma [2], was a true neurosensorial tumor originating from the olfactory epithelium and differing from olfactory neuroblastomas which are generally considered to be apudomas.

We have recently had the opportunity of ultrastructurally and immunohistochemically examining a similar nasal tumor manifesting initially as an intracranial mass, using antibodies against neurofilament protein (NFP), glial fibrillary acidic protein (GFAP), keratin, neuron-specific protein (NSE), S-100 protein (S-100) and tyrosine hydroxylase (TH). The results obtained appear to contribute to the establishment of the concept of esthesioneuroepithelioma as a clinical entity.

## Case report

In March 1983, a 64-year-old man was admitted to the hospital for headache and weakness in the right leg of 2-month duration. Examination revealed bilateral choked disk and slight muscular weakness and hypesthesia in the right leg. Computed tomography (CT) showed a large tumor mainly involving the right anterior cranial fossa. Angiography revealed that the tumor was fed by the right external carotid artery. Surgical removal of the tumor was performed. However, recurrence occurred 4 months later, and a second removal was performed. During the following month, the patient began to complain of bilateral exophthalmos and nasal bleeding. CT showed a continuous tumor mass involving the anterior cranial fossa and nasal cavity, for which a surgical removal procedure and postoperative irradiation (6,000 rad) were performed. After therapy, the patient revealed no obvious neurological abnormalities except for anosmia, and CT suggested only a small residual tumor in the superior nasal cavity. In January 1985, neck tumors appeared, and metastases to the cervical lymph nodes were suspected. Local radiation therapy (5,200 rad) resulted in disappearance of these tumors. Thereafter, however, his general condition gradually deteriorated, and in April 1985, he became bed-ridden with akinetic mutism. CT showed widespread low-density areas in the bilateral frontal lobes. In May 1986, he died of cardiac insufficiency at the age of 67, about 3 1/2 years after disease onset.

Autopsy was performed 3 h after death. Pathological examination revealed extensive metastases to the lymph nodes of the neck, trachea, bronchi, thoracic wall and superior surface of the diaphragm, showing multiple, well-circumscribed whitish tumor nodules of various sizes. In the visceral organs, no tumors were found either grossly or microscopically. Both lungs showed congestion and edema. The brain showed widespread radiation necrosis mainly involving the bilateral frontal white matter with marked hyaline thickening and adventitial fibrosis of the blood vessels. No residual tumors were detected in the cranial or nasal cavity.

## Materials and methods

Surgically removed tissues were fixed in 10% formalin, and embedded in paraffin. Metastatic tumor nodules obtained at autopsy were divided into several parts. These were fixed in 4% paraformaldehyde in 0.1 M phosphate buffer, pH 7.4, Bouin's solution and ethanol, and embedded in paraffin. Paraffin sections, 4  $\mu$ m in thickness, were stained with hematoxylin-eosin, periodic acid-Schiff (PAS) with or without amylase predigestion, Bodian's method for nerve fibers, and Gomori's method for reticulins.

Tumor tissues for electron microscopy were fixed in 1% glutaraldehyde-3% paraformaldehyde in 0.1 M phosphate buffer, pH 7.4, and post-fixed in 1% osmium tetroxide, then dehydrated through a graded ethanol series, and embedded in Epon 812. Ultrathin sections were stained with lead citrate and uranyl acetate and examined with an electron microscope.

Immunohistochemical studies for the presence of NFP, GFAP, keratin, NSE, S-100 and TH were carried out using the above paraffin-embedded sections. Deparaffinized sections were pretreated with 0.3% H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>-methanol for 1 h at room temperature and with normal goat serum overnight at 4°C. These sections were examined using the peroxidase-antiperoxidase method [32] employing rabbit anti-rat neurofilament 68-, 150- and 200-kDa sera [13, 21] diluted 1:100 for 1 h, rabbit anti-human GFAP serum (Dako, Santa Barbara, Calif, USA) diluted 1:500 for 2 h, rabbit anti-bovine keratin serum (Dako, USA)

diluted 1:200 for 1 h, rabbit anti-bovine NSE serum (Wako, Osaka, Japan) diluted 1:500 for 1 h, rabbit anti-bovine S-100 serum (Dako, USA) diluted 1:2,000 for 2 h, and rabbit anti-bovine TH serum [23, 33] diluted 1:40 for 1 h. The sections were then treated with goat anti-rabbit IgG (Tago, Burlingame, Calif, USA) diluted 1:20 for 30 min and rabbit PAP (DAKO, Glostrup, Denmark) diluted 1:50 for 30 min. In addition, the ethanol-fixed, paraffin-embedded sections were examined using the avidin-biotin-peroxidase complex (ABC) method [12] employing mouse monoclonal antibodies against 68-, 160- and 200-kDa neurofilament (Boehringer Mannheim, West Germany), and cytokeratin (Becton Dickinson, Mountain View, Calif, USA). These antibodies were used at 20  $\mu$ g/ml, 5  $\mu$ g/ml, 5  $\mu$ g/ml and 25  $\mu$ g/ml, respectively. We used a Vectastain ABC kit (Vector, Burlingame, Calif, USA) in this study. To block non-specific binding of biotin/avidin system reagents, deparaffinized sections were pretreated with a Blocking Kit (Vector, USA). The sections were then successively incubated in normal horse serum for 30 min, in mouse monoclonal antibodies for 1 h, in biotinylated horse anti-mouse IgG diluted 1:200 for 30 min, and finally in ABC for 30 min. In both methods, the peroxidase reaction was carried out with freshly prepared 0.02%, 3,3'-diaminobenzidine tetrachloride (DAB) and 0.005% H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub> in 0.05 M Tris-HCl buffer, pH 7.6, for 10 min. Each reaction was performed at room temperature. For control sections, the primary antiserum was replaced with normal rabbit serum. When mouse monoclonal antibody was used, it was replaced with normal mouse serum or ascites. Several neural and non-neural tissues from the present patient served as positive or negative controls.

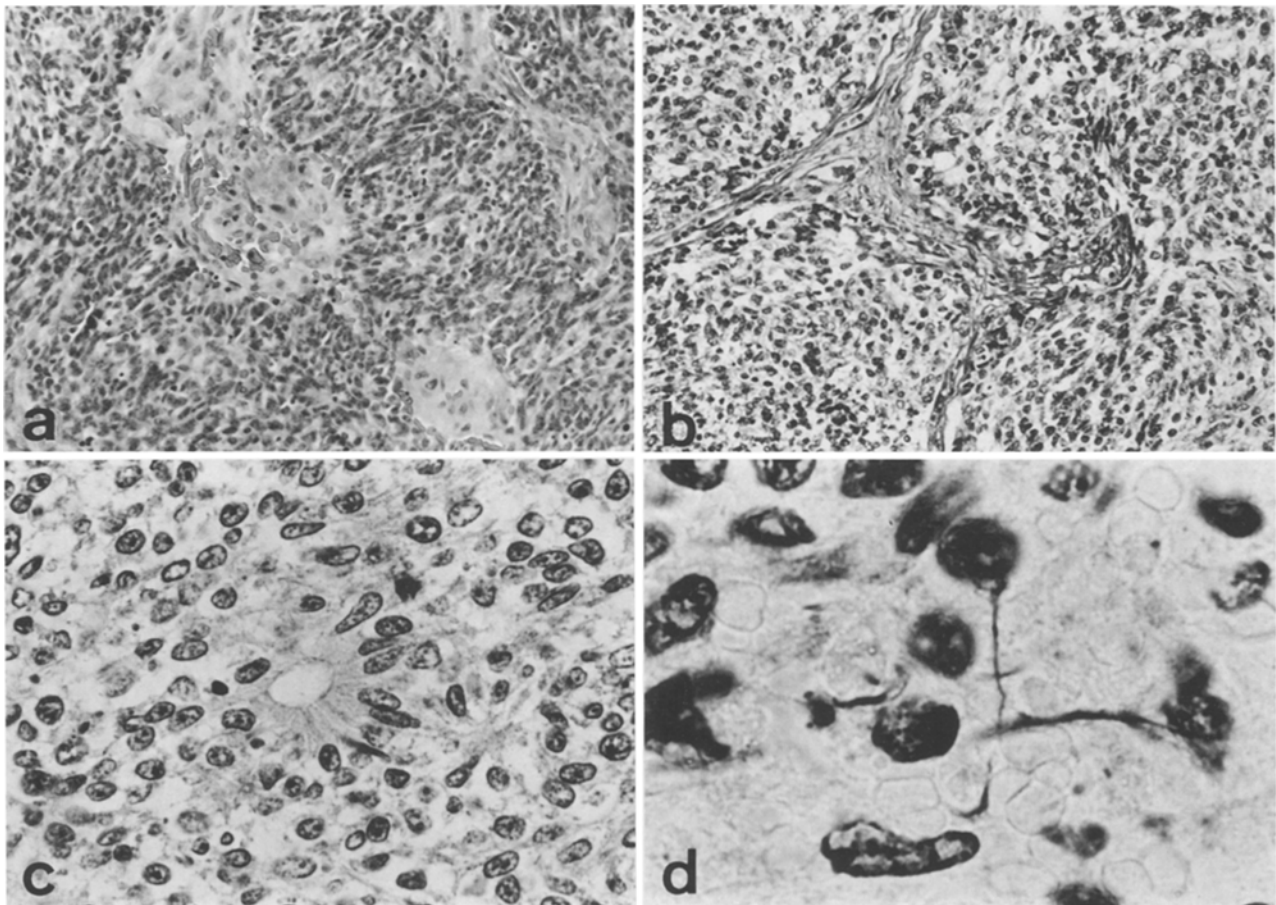
## Results

### *Light microscopy*

In the cranial and nasal cavities, the tumor was composed of fairly uniform, ill-defined cells with round to oval, relatively hyperchromatic nuclei and scanty cytoplasm; the tumor cells were compactly arranged in nests and cords surrounded by a fibrovascular stroma (Fig. 1a). Mitotic figures were frequently observed. The tumor cells were occasionally found in rosette-like arrangements. Bodian's staining demonstrated few positive fibers. Some of the tumor cells showed PAS-positive material in their cytoplasm. With amylase predigestion, PAS-positive material almost totally disappeared. These histological features were reproduced in the metastatic tumor nodules (Fig. 1b). In addition, the tumor cells were often found in characteristic tubular arrangements (Fig. 1c) and Bodian's staining revealed many positive fibers (Fig. 1d).

### *Electron microscopy*

Ultrastructural findings were essentially the same in all the materials examined, although postmortem artefacts were conspicuous in the autopsy specimens. The tumor was mainly composed of round to oval cells with relatively sparse cell organelles arranged in



**Fig. 1.** **a** Histology of the surgically removed intracranial tumor. **b** A cervical metastatic tumor nodule, showing essentially the same histology. **c** Tubular arrangement of the tumor cells. **d** Argyrophilic fibers extending from the tumor cell bodies. **a, b** H&E,  $\times 170$ ; **c** H&E,  $\times 520$ ; **d** Bodian,  $\times 1,300$

a cell-to-cell pattern; many cell processes were also present between the cell bodies. These were joined together by occasional punctate adhesions and desmosomes. At the margins of the nests, the tumor cell bodies and processes were seen to rest on the basal lamina.

Among these tumor cells, at least two different cell types could be distinguished on the basis of additional ultrastructural features. The tumor cells of the first type were often seen in rosette-like or incomplete tubular arrangements; they showed relatively well-developed cell organelles such as Golgi's apparatus, rough ER and mitochondria (Fig. 2a). Few intermediate filaments were found. Many centrioles, probably serving as basal bodies, were seen in these cells (Fig. 2a). In addition, cilia were occasionally encountered (Fig. 2b). Some processes showed the features of neurites (Fig. 2c) or of dystrophic axons.

In the tubular arrangements, tumor cells of another distinct type were well demonstrated; they were joined by apical junctional complexes, such as

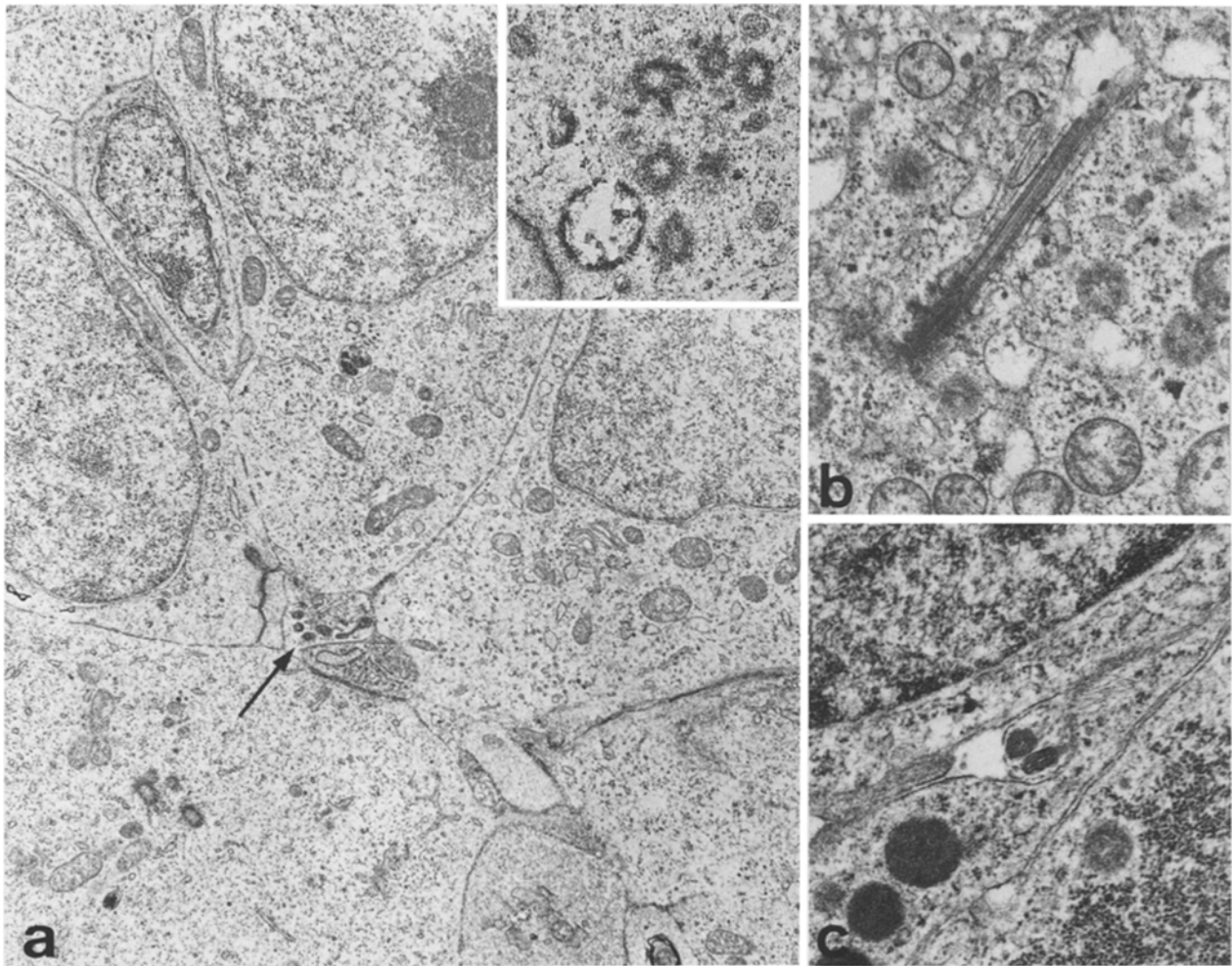
tight junctions and desmosomes, and showed numerous microvilli originating from their free surfaces (Fig. 3a). The microvilli and free cell membranes were coated with granular or spike-like material (Fig. 3b). These cells were further characterized by cytoplasmic bundles of intermediate filaments (tonofilaments) (Fig. 3b, c). No cilia or basal bodies were found in the cells of this type.

No convincing dense-cored secretory granules could be found in the tumor cells.

#### *Immunohistochemistry*

Both surgically removed and autopsied tumor tissues showed cells immunoreactive for NFP, keratin, NSE and S-100. With regard to NFP, positive immunostaining was more strongly demonstrated in the ethanol-fixed, paraffin-embedded autopsied tissues.

Some of the tumor cells were shown to be positive for each of the three neurofilament polypeptides when stained with the rabbit polyclonal antibodies. There



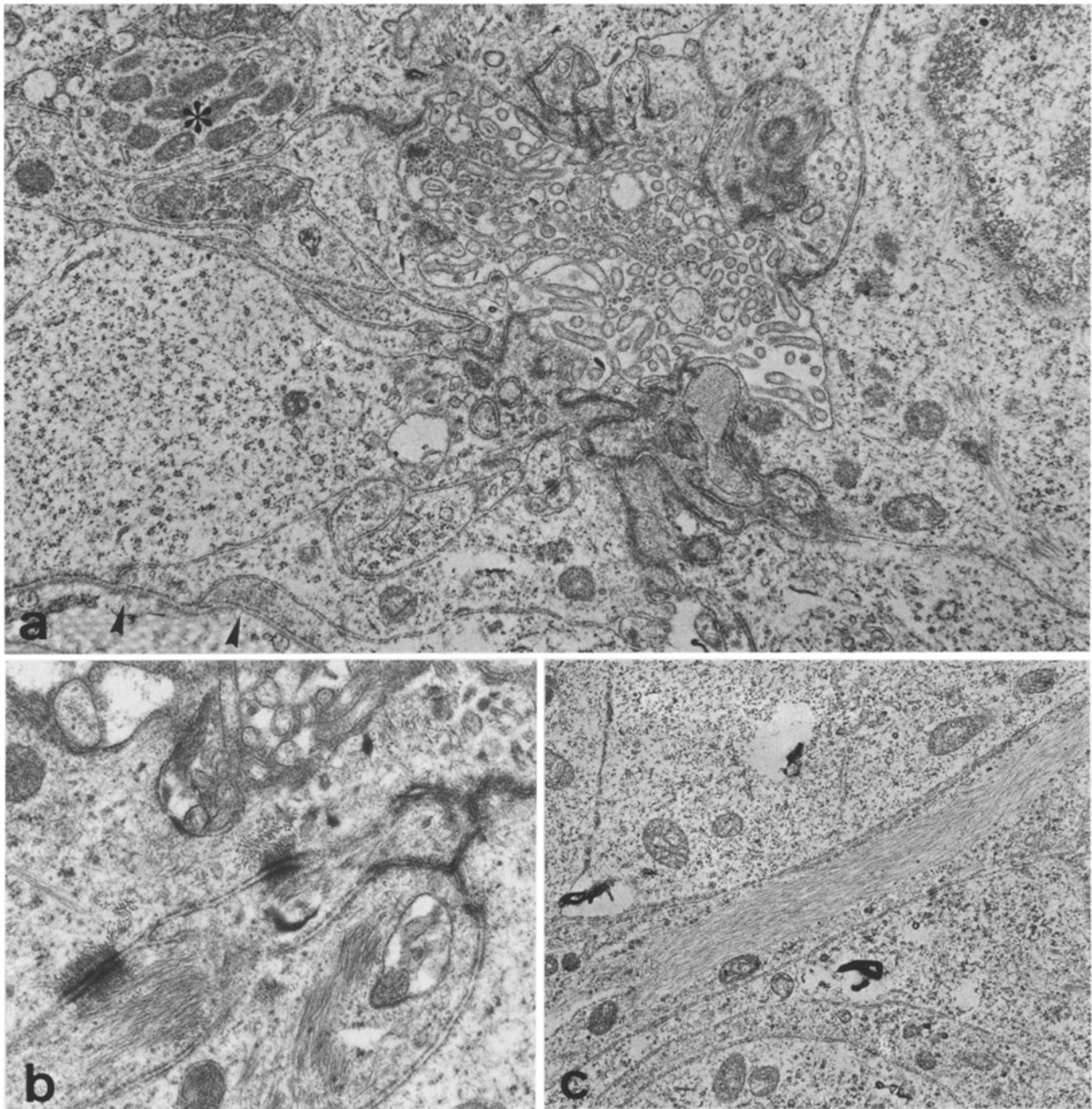
**Fig. 2 a – c.** Surgically removed intracranial tumor. **a** Electron micrograph illustrating a rosette-like arrangement of tumor cells with apical junctional complexes. Centrioles are seen at the *lower left*. *Arrow* indicates a neurite-like process containing many mitochondria. *Inset*: Tumor cell displaying many centrioles in the apical cytoplasm. **b** Electron micrograph illustrating a cilium extending into a tiny lumen. Many mitochondria are also seen. **c** A neurite-like process (*center*) containing microtubules and mitochondria. **a**  $\times 10,000$ , *inset*  $\times 16,000$ ; **b**  $\times 22,000$ , **c**  $\times 24,000$

was no obvious difference in the number of a positive cell between the three polypeptides. The 68-kDa and 200-kDa polypeptides were mainly localized in the cell bodies, and rarely in the processes (Fig. 4a). On the other hand, the 150-kDa polypeptide was well demonstrated in the cell processes. These positive cells were occasionally found in rosette-like or tubular arrangements (Fig. 4b). When ethanol-fixed, paraffin-embedded sections were stained with mouse monoclonal antibodies, the tumor showed positive cells for each of the three neurofilament polypeptides, 68, 160 and 200 kDa. However, these cells were much smaller in number compared with those stained with the rabbit polyclonal antibodies.

Positive immunostaining for keratin was observed in the cells mainly located at the periphery of the nests (Fig. 4c), although the number of positive cells varied

considerably from nest to nest. In the tubular arrangements (olfactory rosettes), most cells were found to be immunoreactive for keratin (Fig. 4d). The serial sections failed to demonstrate coexpression of NFP and keratin in the tumor cells. Simultaneously, it was also noted that a large number of tumor cells were negative for both NFP and keratin. When the mouse monoclonal antibody to cytokeratin was employed, the staining results obtained were very similar to those observed with the rabbit polyclonal antibody.

A relatively large number of tumor cells were shown to be positive for NSE. They tended to form irregular clusters in the centers of the nests (Fig. 4e). A few cells showed positive staining for S-100 without any particular arrangement, and rarely showed slender, long processes resembling axons or dendrites (Fig. 4f). However, serial sections failed to demon-



**Fig. 3 a–c.** Surgically removed intracranial tumor. **a** Electron micrograph illustrating tubular arrangement of the tumor cells. Numerous microvilli and apical junctional complexes are clearly seen in the center. A process, probably of the first cell type, is also seen at the upper left (asterisk). Arrowheads indicate basal lamina. **b** Tubular arrangement of tumor cells, containing desmosomes and dense intermediate filaments (tonofilaments). **c** Bundles of tonofilaments frequently present in the cell processes. **a**  $\times 22,000$ ; **b**  $\times 33,000$ ; **c**  $\times 13,000$

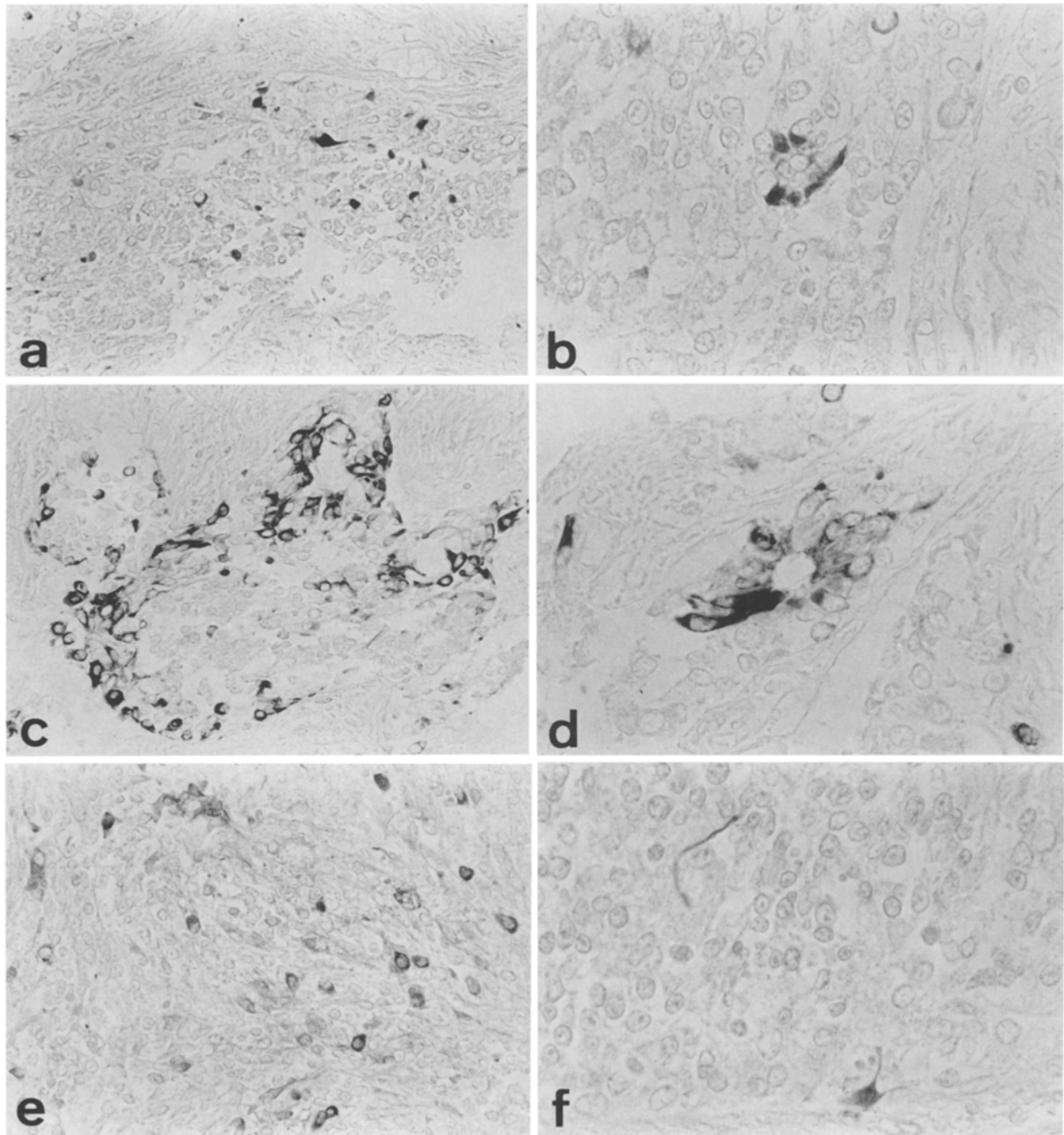
strate coexpression of NFP and S-100. GFAP and TH were not detected immunohistochemically in any of the materials examined.

### Discussion

Previous ultrastructural studies on so-called olfactory neuroblastoma have repeatedly demonstrated the

presence of dense-cored or membrane-bound secretory granules in the tumor cells [5, 7, 11, 18, 19, 31, 35]. Histochemical examinations have also shown that such tumor cells possess biogenic amines [14, 19]. These features of olfactory neuroblastoma are common with those of peripheral neuroblastoma, which has been considered to originate from cells of the APUD system [26].





**Fig. 4.** **a, b** Tumor stained with rabbit neurofilament 200-kDa antiserum. **a** Positive immunostaining is observed in scattered tumor cells. **b** Positive cells are seen in a rosette-like arrangement. **c, d** Tumor stained with rabbit keratin antiserum. **c** Positive cells are seen at the periphery. **d** Most tumor cells seen in this tubular arrangement are positive for keratin. **e, f** Tumor stained with rabbit NSE antiserum (**e**) or with rabbit S-100 antiserum (**f**). **a–d** Ethanol-fixed, paraffin-embedded; **e, f** Bouin's solution-fixed, paraffin-embedded, **f**, counterstained with hematoxylin; **a, c, e**  $\times 260$ ; **b, d, f**  $\times 520$

Histologically, the present tumor showed characteristic tubular arrangements (olfactory rosettes), which were originally described by Berger et al. [2] in a case reported as an olfactory esthesioneuroepithelioma. However, this structure was absent in a case sub-

sequently reported by Berger and Coutard [1] as an olfactory esthesioneurocytoma, which has a marked resemblance to peripheral neuroblastoma. Accordingly, our case was diagnosed as esthesioneuroepithelioma in the strict sense.

At the ultrastructural level, two cell types were clearly demonstrated with characteristic morphological features. The first cell type was characterized by cilia and centrioles, probably serving as basal bodies, in addition to well-developed cytoplasmic organelles. They also bore processes resembling neurites. The second cell type was found in tubular arrangements with numerous microvilli and apical junctional complexes. Bundles of tonofilaments were also a characteristic finding of this cell type. No dense-cored secretory granules could be found in the tumor cells. When the primary site of the present tumor is considered, it is evident that these two cell types were similar to the sensory neurons and sustentacular cells of the olfactory epithelium [8, 27, 28].

A survey of the literature revealed the rare occurrence of nasal tumors which could be considered to be very similar, if not identical, to that in our case [10, 16, 17, 31]. In these previous cases, olfactory rosettes showing tubular arrangements of columnar tumor cell were characteristic histological findings, as in our case. Kudo et al. [16] were the first to demonstrate two different types of tumor cells; the first type showed cilia and basal bodies and the second type was found with microvilli and apical junctional complexes in the tubular arrangements. Dense-cored granules were not observed. They discussed the ultrastructural similarities between the tumor cells and olfactory epithelial cells. Hassoun et al. [10] reported a case of esthesioneuroepithelioma and distinguished this tumor from usual olfactory neuroblastomas. The tumor showed two different cell types reminiscent of sensory neurons and sustentacular cells of the olfactory epithelium. The above authors emphasized the absence of dense-cored secretory granules in these cells in considering the histogenesis of the tumor.

In the present study, NFP, keratin, NSE and S-100 were detected immunohistochemically in a variable number of tumor cells. NFP is composed of three major polypeptides with different molecular weights. This protein, which forms intermediate filaments (neurofilaments), is specific for most, but probably not all, neurons in the central and peripheral nervous systems [24]. In peripheral neuronal tumors such as neuroblastoma, ganglioneuroblastoma, and ganglioglioma, neoplastic neuroblasts and ganglion cells have been shown to be immunoreactive for NFP [4, 21, 24, 25]. On the other hand, keratin proteins are organized in the cell in the form of intermediate filaments (tonofilaments), which are found in most epithelial cells. The presence of keratin has been shown to be useful in establishing the epithelial nature of a tumor [20, 24]. Therefore, our findings regarding NFP and keratin indicated that the present tumor contained

two distinct cell types, neuronal and epithelial, in accord with the ultrastructural findings.

The presence of NSE has been observed in neurons, neuroendocrine cells and neoplastic neuronal cells [36, 38]. However, the specificity of this enzyme for cells of neuronal lineage has recently been questioned by several investigators who have immunohistochemically demonstrated the presence of NSE in non-neuronal cells and their tumors including carcinoma [9, 25, 39]. In the present tumor, the distribution of NSE-positive cells was quite different from that of keratin-positive cells when examined in serial sections. It is our impression that in the present case, NSE could have been expressed by immature neuronal cells. S-100, first detected in astrocytes and Schwann cells, has now been demonstrated in a wide variety of neural and non-neural tissues and their tumors [15, 22]. S-100 was detected in a few tumor cells in the present case, and the cytology shown by immunohistochemistry was suggestive of their neuronal differentiation. Similar observations have been reported in some peripheral neuroblastomas [4, 15]. GFAP forms intermediate filaments (glial filaments) characteristic of astrocytes and other glial cells in the nervous system [24]. However, the present findings suggested that the tumor contained no glial components. TH, a rate-limiting enzyme in the catecholamine-synthesizing pathway, has been considered to be a marker for catecholamine-producing neuronal cells [23]. The presence of this enzyme has often been shown immunohistochemically in peripheral neuronal tumors [4, 33]. However, TH was completely negative in the present case.

Only a few reports are currently available on the immunohistochemical features of olfactory neuroblastoma (esthesioneuroblastoma). Trojanowski et al. [37] demonstrated the presence of NFP in scattered tumor cells in an esthesioneuroblastoma. However, they did not mention any possible keratin content. Vollrath et al. [40] examined an esthesioneuroblastoma for the presence of the five known types of intermediate filament (keratin, vimentin, desmin, GFAP and neurofilament). However, no tumor cells showed positive staining for any of these filaments. More recently, Choi and Anderson [6] examined ten cases of olfactory neuroblastoma using NSE, GFAP and S-100 antibodies. Although NFP and keratin were not investigated, all the cases showed many NSE- and S-100-positive cells with particular arrangements. It is important to note that none of the tumors described in these reports displayed olfactory rosettes. At the ultrastructural level, they showed no epithelial cells characterized by bundles of tonofilaments, but neuronal cells containing typical dense-cored granules were present [6, 37, 40].

A recent immunohistochemical study on the human fetal olfactory epithelium has clearly demonstrated that sensory neurons are positive for NSE and NFP. It is interesting to note that NSE is detected earlier than NFP in the process of development [34]. Immunohistochemical examination of the same fetal materials [34] showed that sustentacular cells were positive for keratin (data not shown). In the adult rat olfactory epithelium, sustentacular cells are strongly positive with antibodies to keratin [41], while sensory neurons, although small in number, are stained with antibodies to NFP [30]. A certain subpopulation of basal cells are negative for these intermediate filament proteins [41]. These unique immunohistochemical properties of the normal olfactory epithelium appear to well explain the histogenesis of the present tumor arising from the superior nasal cavity. S-100 is not present in the normal olfactory epithelium [34]. However, it can be considered that the cells could have obtained this protein in the process of neoplastic transformation.

Our ultrastructural and immunohistochemical findings strongly suggest that the present tumor, an esthesioneuroepithelioma, is actually the neoplastic counterpart of the olfactory epithelium, or more precisely, is derived from the bipotential, undifferentiated basal cells of this epithelium. The olfactory epithelium develops from primordial placodes cytoarchitecturally similar to brain vesicles or neural tubes. On the other hand, olfactory neuroblastomas are considered to be derived from the APUD cell nests of the ethmoidal and maxillary sinuses [5, 14, 19]. APUD cells are of neural crest origin and are distributed widely throughout the body. It should also be emphasized that a diagnosis of esthesioneuroepithelioma may be difficult in certain cases showing predominant epithelial differentiation. Caution must therefore be exercised, since this tumor is not a genuine carcinoma, which is common among tumors arising in the nasal cavity.

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