

Responses of Hemocytes and Gill Tissues to Sublethal Cadmium Chloride Poisoning in the Crab *Paratelphusa hydrodromous* (Herbst)

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Abstract. The hemocytic and gill tissue responses of the crab *Paratelphusa hydrodromous* (Herbst) to a wide range of sublethal concentrations of cadmium chloride (0.02–0.50 $\mu\text{M/L}$) were examined after a 30-day exposure using hemocyte counts (THC and DHC) and lamellar pathology. A continued reduction in the hemocyte counts and selective changes in the numbers of hyalinocytes and eosinophilic granulocytes was evident in the toxified crabs. Under sublethal stress, the hyalinocytes developed eccentric nuclei, granular cytoplasm and membrane blebs. Atypical shape, lobate nucleus, dense cytoplasmic deposits and granuloplasmic vacuoles were frequently observed in the granulocytes. Greater proliferation of prohemocytes and abnormal hemocyte morphology indicated cadmium-induced neoplastic transformation of hemocytoblastic organs. No major structural changes in the gills were noted at 0.02 $\mu\text{M CdCl}_2$. Nodular gill disease (NGD), hemocytic hyperplasia and sloughing of walled off hemocytes were prominent lesions after 0.50 μM cadmium chloride exposure.

Most laboratory studies evaluating toxicity of cadmium to decapod crustaceans are concerned with the lethal concentrations (Thorpe and Lake 1974; Ahsanullah 1976; Ahsanullah and Arnett 1978), strategies of accumulation (Wright 1977; Jennings and Rainbow 1979; White and Rainbow 1982, 1986; Rainbow and White 1989), localization in tissues (Nimmo *et al.* 1977), and changes in gill morphology (Papathanassiou and King 1983). Hemocytes are of known importance in the internal defenses of crustacea against microorganisms (Robin 1970; Sinderman 1971; Fontaine and Lightner 1975). The applicability of hemocyte counts for the elucidation of pathological conditions has also been suggested (Mix and Sparks 1980; Martin and Graves 1985). However the effect of metal pollutants on the hemogram during pathologic conditions has not been critically studied. It was the aim of this investigation to study the role of hemocytes during different pathological states of *Paratelphusa hydrodromous* (Herbst) exposed to sublethal doses of cadmium chloride.

Methods

Test Animal

Paratelphusa hydrodromous (Herbst) (Decapoda: Paratelphusidae) were collected during the early part of the breeding season (December–January) (Anilkumar and Adiyodi 1980), from irrigation canals of the river Thambraparani, Tamil nadu, India. Prior to experimentation, they were acclimatized for at least two weeks to $29 \pm 1^\circ\text{C}$ water temperature, 6.51 ± 0.21 ml/L, dissolved oxygen, 7.6 ± 0.1 pH, and 165 ± 10 mg/L total hardness (as CaCO_3).

Acute Toxicity Bioassay

A preliminary 96-h acute toxicity bioassay with $\text{CdCl}_2 \cdot 2\text{H}_2\text{O}$ (reagent grade) was conducted in 2-L shallow glass troughs with 10 intermoult (hard shelled) crabs of uniform size (carapace width 2.80 ± 0.5 cm, weight 7.75 ± 0.50 g). All tests were static and the bioassay was repeated three times. Observations for mortality was made twice daily at regular intervals. The bioassay procedures used were those recommended by the Committee on Methods of Toxicity Tests with Aquatic Organisms (1975). The regression method of Finney (1971) was used to calculate the LC_{50} values.

Experimental Design

To study the hemogram responses, healthy adult female crabs weighing 12–14 g size were selected from the crabbery and were treated with graded doses of sublethal cadmium chloride solution (0, 0.02, 0.05, 0.10, 0.20, 0.40, and 0.50 $\mu\text{M CdCl}_2/\text{L}$) for 30 days. The selection of the sublethal concentrations was based on the results of acute bioassay studies. Forty animals (four groups of ten) were tested at each dose level. The crabs in exposures were fed *ad libitum* of minced fish *Lepidoccephalichthys thermalis* supplemented with goat liver. The test media were replaced thrice a week.

Table 1. Lethal concentrations of cadmium chloride to *P. hydrodromous*

| Exposure time (h) | Slope | Intercept | LC ₀ (μM/L) | LC ₅₀ (μM/L) | LC ₁₀₀ (μM/L) |
|-------------------|-------|-----------|------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| 24 | 1.363 | 1.943 | 11.803 | 85.770 | 188.850 |
| 48 | 1.577 | 2.384 | 5.902 | 37.574 | 94.426 |
| 72 | 1.664 | 3.002 | 1.475 | 12.836 | 4.721 |
| 96 | 1.226 | 4.434 | 0.197 | 1.623 | 2.361 |

LC₀ and LC₁₀₀ are actual values and LC₅₀ is estimated

Hemolymph Smears

Hemolymph samples from the heart or pericardial sinus were taken every 3 days. Thin hemocyte films were prepared by carefully spreading a drop of unfixed hemolymph. They were then air-dried, fixed in 10% formalin-methanol (1:9) and flooded in Giemsa stain (Cornick and Stewart 1978). The identification of hemocyte types were based on cell size, shape, and staining properties (Wood and Visentin 1967).

Hemocyte Counts

The counting of free hemocytes (THC) was done by using a hemocytometer with improved double Neubauer ruling and a diluting fluid suitable for crustaceans (Stewart *et al.* 1967). Whenever cell rupture, agglutination and plasma clot formation appeared either in the dilution pipette or in the counting chamber, the count was not made.

Differential hemocyte counts (DHC) were made on freshly stained smears following the method of Mix and Sparks (1980). The different types of hemocytes were counted at random under the microscope (×400) and the number of each cell type expressed in percentage, to which the following formula was applied.

$$\text{DHC (\%)} = \frac{\text{number of cells of a type}}{\text{total number of cells counted}} \times 100$$

Histological Technique

Gill tissues from all control and treated animals of four sublethal doses (0.02, 0.05, 0.25, 0.50 μM CdCl₂/L) were dissected out after 30 days in crustacean ringer solution (Van Harreveld 1936) and fixed for at least 24 h in Bouin's fluid or Helly's fluid. Paraffin blocks were made with sections of 6–8 μm. They were stained with Harri's haematoxylin and Bowie's eosin or Masson's trichrome.

Results

The data of the cadmium bioassays performed on *P. hydrodromous* are presented in Table 1. The 24-h to 96-h lethal concentration of cadmium chloride to the crabs ranged from 85.770 to 1.623 μM/L.

Normal Hemocyte Morphology and Hemogram

In *P. hydrodromous*, prohemocytes (pr) numbered 8–9% of the total hemocyte population. They were the smallest hemocytes with a diameter of 5–6 μm and centrally placed large nuclei (Figure 1). Hyalinocytes (hy) varied from 26 to 28% of the total population. They were observed in a variety of shapes (8–12 μm in diameter). The nucleus occupied more of the cytoplasm as the cell matured. Basophilic granules were occasionally noted in the cytoplasm. Intermediate granulocytes (ig) of 10–12 μm diameter accounted for most of the hemocyte population (42–45%) (Figure 2). The eosinophilic granulocytes (eg) represented 20–25% of the circulating hemocytes. They were the largest of the hemocytes observed (14–16 μm). The nuclei were eccentric and the cytoplasm contained coarse granules (Figure 3).

Pathology of Hemocytes

Several hemocyte pathologies were observed at the light microscope level, when *P. hydrodromous* were sublethally treated with cadmium chloride for 30 days. In hyalinocytes, the nuclei were pushed towards the periphery and the cytoplasm became more granular (Figure 4). The eosinophilic granulocytes invariably developed granuloplasmic vacuoles, membrane blebs, and dense cytoplasmic deposits (Figure 5). Some of the granulocytes were aberrant in shape with lobate nuclei and highly vacuolized cytoplasm (Figure 6). Achromophilia of cytoplasm was observed in a few cells (Figure 7).

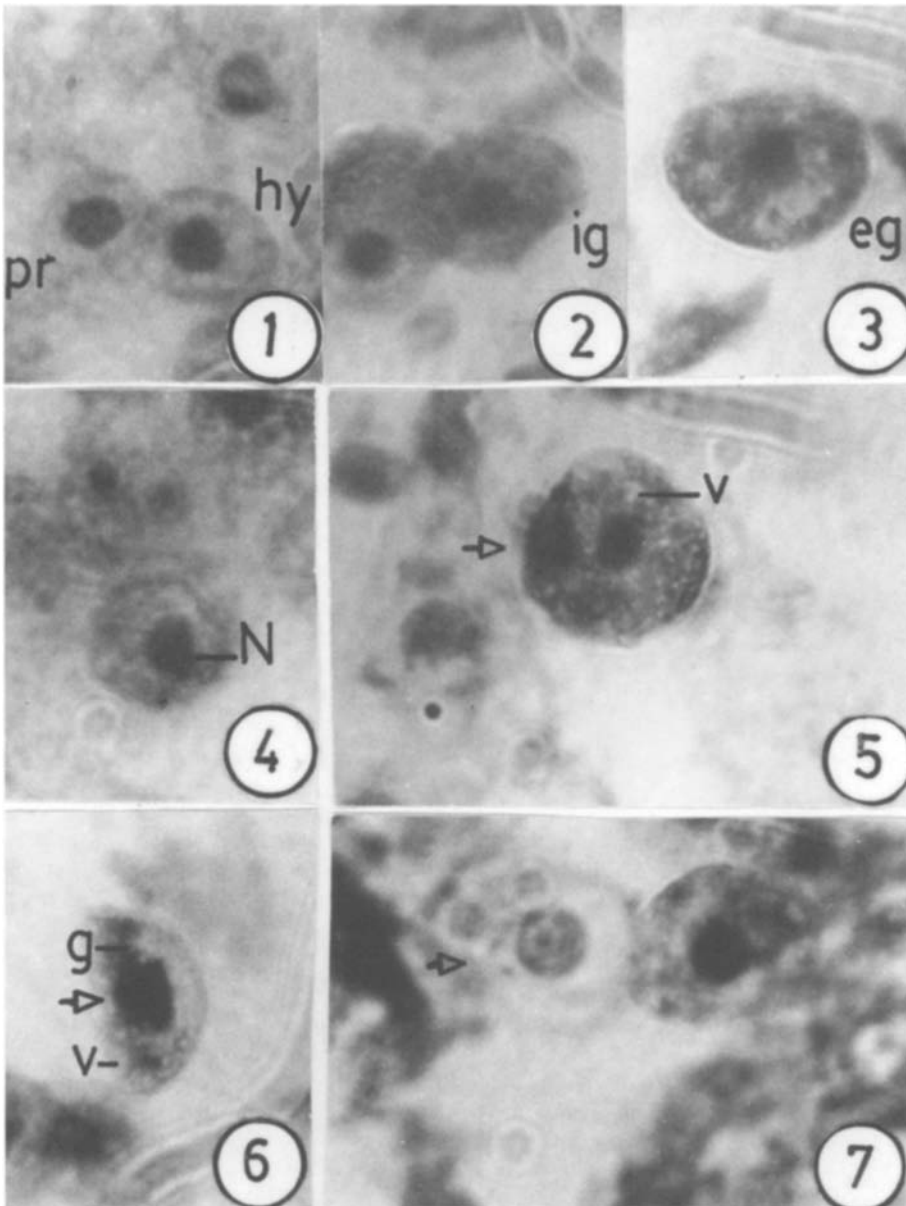
Hemogram Response

Exposure of *P. hydrodromous* to increasing sublethal levels of cadmium chloride induced significant variation in total and differential hemocyte counts (Tables 2–3). The total number of circulating hemocytes was drastically reduced to over the control at concentrations above 0.20 μM/L. Higher cadmium stress selectively reduced the percentage occurrence of hyalinocytes and eosinophilic granulocytes to 21% and 32%, respectively and enhanced the counts of prohemocytes and intermediate granulocytes to 69% and 18%, respectively. In general, prohemocytes and eosinophilic granulocytes exhibited greater coefficient of variation of 15–16% after cadmium chloride exposure.

Branchial Pathology and Hemocyte Behavior

Gills of crabs in the control exhibited no pathological alterations (Figure 8). The branchial lamellae of *P. hydrodromous* histologically resembled to that of *Palaemon serratus* (Papathanassiou and King 1983). The respiratory epithelium composed of a layer of flattened squamous cells. Internal to the epithelium was the hemolymph channel transversed at regular intervals by transverse and central cells (Figure 9). The outer lamellar surface was covered by a thin chitinous layer.

Gills of *P. hydrodromous* exposed to 0.02 μM/L of cadmium chloride for 30 days showed swelling and disruption of central cells (Figure 10). No major structural changes that could be



Figs. 1–3. Normal hemocyte morphology of *P. hydrodromous* ($\times 1500$)

1 Prohemocyte (pr) and hyalinocyte (hy). **2** Intermediate granulocyte (ig) and eosinophilic granulocyte (eg).

3 Another focus of eosinophilic granulocyte (eg)

Figs. 4–7. Hemocytic pathology of *P. hydrodromous* induced by sublethal toxicity of cadmium chloride for 30 days.

4 Hyalinocyte showing eccentric nucleus (N) and granular cytoplasm.

5 Eosinophilic granulocyte exhibiting granuloplasmic vacuoles (v) and dense cytoplasmic deposits (arrows).

6 An aberrant eosinophilic granulocyte showing lobate nucleus (arrow) large granular masses (g) and many vacuoles (v).

7 A degranulated granulocyte (arrow) and another hypertrophied granulocyte

attributed to the dose were detected. At exposures of $0.05 \mu\text{M/L}$, gills of test crabs exhibited necrotic foci and aggregation of blackened hemocytes around injured tissues (Figure 11). Many of the hyalinocytes showed large wavy frills pseudopodia and some of them stretched out into fibroblast-like cells. Cytotoxicity of gills were evident at $0.25 \mu\text{M/L}$ of cadmium chloride. The lamellae were irregularly disposed and the hemolymph channels were ruptured at many points (Figure 12). Proliferation of hemocytes and adherence of them to branchial lacunae were increasingly apparent. The necrotic epithelial cells were strongly vacuolized with hypertrophied nuclei (Figure 13). Penetration of granulocytes was observed in the epithelial cells displaying vacuolar degeneration. Obstruction of the hemolymph vessels by intravascular cellular clots and hemostasis were further severe pathological changes.

Nodular formations (=nodular gill disease, NGD) were extensively observed at $0.50 \mu\text{M CdCl}_2/\text{L}$ (Figure 14). Disruption of hemocytes was evident in many of the necrotic lesions. In the

centers of more advanced lesions, hemocytic hyperplasia, and sloughing of walled-off hemocytes were noticed (Figure 15).

Discussion

Cadmium chloride, above $1.623 \mu\text{M/L}$ in the medium, proved to be acutely lethal to the crab *P. hydrodromous*. The results of the present study were comparable to the values reported for other decapod crustaceans (Eisler 1971; Collier *et al.* 1973; Thorp and Lake 1974).

Highly significant ($P < 0.001$) and dose-related decrease in total hemocyte counts were observed in the crab *P. hydrodromous*. This hemocytopenic response may be resulted from reduction in the counts of hyalinocytes and eosinophilic granulocytes ($P < 0.001$ and < 0.05). More proliferation of prohemocytes and intermediate granulocytes clearly demonstrated the neoplastic transformation of hemocytopoietic or-

Table 2. Total counts of the circulating hemocytes of *P. hydrodromous* exposed to sublethal concentrations of cadmium chloride for 30 days

| Time (days) | Control | Total hemocyte counts (cells/mm ³) | | | | | |
|--|-----------------|--|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| | | 0.02 μ M Cd/L | 0.05 μ M Cd/L | 0.10 μ M Cd/L | 0.20 μ M Cd/L | 0.40 μ M Cd/L | 0.50 μ M Cd/L |
| 3 | 1135 \pm 24.4 | 1100 \pm 36.4 | 1087 \pm 55.4 | 1170 \pm 40.9 | 1150 \pm 43.0 | 1026 \pm 45.6 | 1030 \pm 39.8 |
| 6 | 1140 \pm 35.5 | 1075 \pm 20.0 | 1050 \pm 32.3 | 1050 \pm 45.6 | 1025 \pm 39.6 | 910 \pm 32.7 | 880 \pm 35.4 |
| 9 | 1125 \pm 25.0 | 1050 \pm 32.2 | 980 \pm 43.2 | 1025 \pm 30.1 | 1055 \pm 42.1 | 838 \pm 31.4 | 815 \pm 42.6 |
| 12 | 1142 \pm 32.5 | 1025 \pm 16.5 | 1017 \pm 45.6 | 1035 \pm 32.0 | 925 \pm 31.4 | 830 \pm 20.2 | 800 \pm 22.9 |
| 15 | 1105 \pm 20.4 | 1087 \pm 40.7 | 1008 \pm 25.0 | 1075 \pm 40.3 | 875 \pm 24.9 | 862 \pm 25.0 | 810 \pm 18.7 |
| 18 | 1162 \pm 23.9 | 1037 \pm 42.4 | 978 \pm 37.5 | 985 \pm 23.9 | 838 \pm 45.6 | 840 \pm 32.7 | 775 \pm 20.4 |
| 21 | 1152 \pm 22.4 | 975 \pm 33.7 | 1005 \pm 31.9 | 880 \pm 25.0 | 813 \pm 23.0 | 730 \pm 20.4 | 760 \pm 23.9 |
| 24 | 1150 \pm 20.4 | 950 \pm 31.4 | 912 \pm 25.6 | 862 \pm 31.0 | 870 \pm 20.4 | 700 \pm 23.9 | 680 \pm 12.4 |
| 27 | 1140 \pm 25.4 | 937 \pm 23.9 | 975 \pm 20.4 | 875 \pm 35.0 | 762 \pm 35.3 | 762 \pm 31.5 | 650 \pm 32.7 |
| 30 | 1135 \pm 39.6 | 962 \pm 25.1 | 937 \pm 32.0 | 866 \pm 25.0 | 730 \pm 18.5 | 625 \pm 37.2 | 610 \pm 30.9 |
| Exposure time (X) vs total hemocyte counts (-Y) | | | | | | | |
| Regression Coefficient | b 0.0996 | -1.3662 | -1.0716 | -2.5046 | -3.2506 | -2.6577 | -2.9222 |
| Correlation Coefficient | a 1138.6 | 1042.34 | 1012.58 | 1023.83 | 957.94 | 856.15 | 829.21 |
| Significance | r 0.2482 | -0.8906 | -0.8207 | -0.9144 | -0.9420 | -0.9127 | -0.9451 |
| | P(NS) | <0.001 | <0.01 | <0.001 | <0.001 | <0.001 | <0.001 |

P < 0.001, highly significant; P < 0.01, more significant; NS, not significant

Table 3. Differential hemocyte counts of *P. hydrodromous* exposed to sublethal concentrations of cadmium chloride for 30 days

| Cadmium exposure concentrations (μ M/L) | Differential hemocyte count (%) | | | |
|--|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| | Prohemocyte | Hyalinocyte | Intermediate granulocyte | Eosinophilic granulocyte |
| Control | 8.69 \pm 0.25 | 27.51 \pm 0.48 | 42.00 \pm 0.58 | 21.75 \pm 0.29 |
| 0.02 | 11.50 \pm 0.65 (+32.3) | 24.25 \pm 1.08 (11.9) | 42.75 \pm 0.63 (+1.8) | 21.50 \pm 0.35 (-1.1) |
| 0.05 | 12.00 \pm 0.71 (+38.1) | 24.50 \pm 0.65 (-10.9) | 42.50 \pm 0.71 (+1.2) | 21.00 \pm 1.05 (-3.4) |
| 0.10 | 13.00 \pm 0.91 (+49.6) | 23.50 \pm 0.60 (-14.6) | 42.50 \pm 0.65 (+3.2) | 20.00 \pm 0.77 (-8.0) |
| 0.20 | 13.00 \pm 0.40 (+49.6) | 23.25 \pm 0.75 (15.5) | 44.50 \pm 0.29 (+5.9) | 19.25 \pm 1.83 (-11.5) |
| 0.40 | 14.25 \pm 0.25 (+64.0) | 22.25 \pm 1.03 (-19.1) | 46.00 \pm 0.41 (+9.5) | 14.75 \pm 0.91 (-32.2) |
| 0.50 | 14.00 \pm 0.41 (+69.1) | 21.75 \pm 0.98 (-20.9) | 49.50 \pm 1.08 (+17.9) | 14.75 \pm 0.98 (-32.2) |
| % CV (exptl) | 15.30 | 7.92 | 5.92 | 15.94 |
| % CV (control) | 2.27 | 4.62 | 2.03 | 4.09 |
| P (control vs exptl) | <0.001 | <0.001 | =0.05 | <0.05 |

Values in parentheses are per cent increase (+) and decrease (-) from the corresponding controls

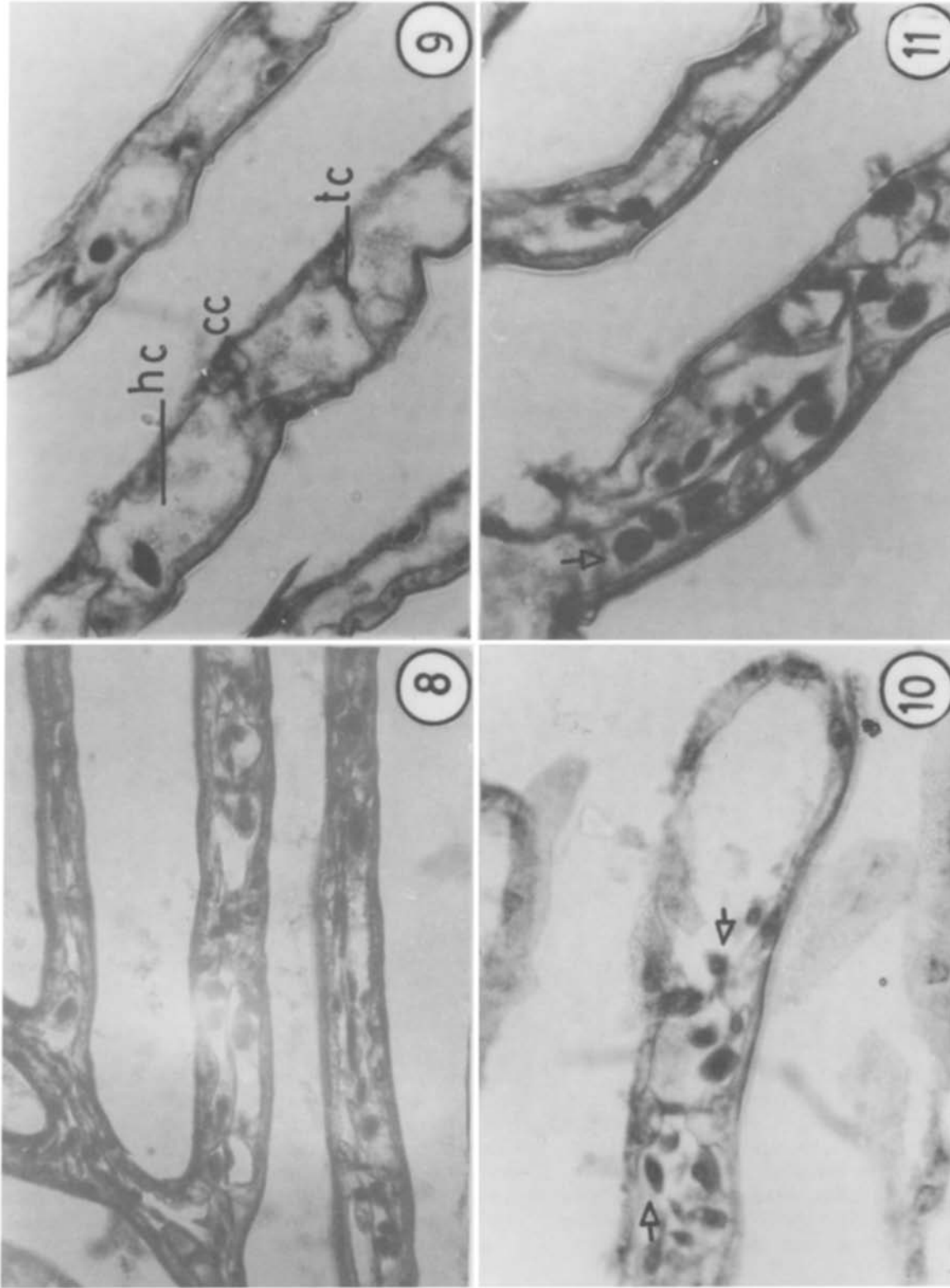
P Value calculated by students t test

gans. The reduction in the number of circulating hemocytes was a common pathogenic response in lobsters and crabs experimentally infused with endotoxins (Levin 1967; Cornick and Stewart 1968; Stewart *et al.* 1969; Newman and Feng 1982). The formation of hemocyte clumps in the blood sinuses and gills may be effected the decline in the number of circulating hemocytes (Smith *et al.* 1984). In the crayfish, administration of endotoxin induced degranulation and lysis of hemocytes (Smith and Soderhall 1983).

Morphologically, eosinophilic granulocytes of toxified crabs exhibited atypical shape, lobate nucleus, dense cytoplasmic deposits and more granulo-plasmic vacuoles. The hyalinocytes developed eccentric nucleus, granular cytoplasm and membrane blebs. In general, alteration in the density of granules in

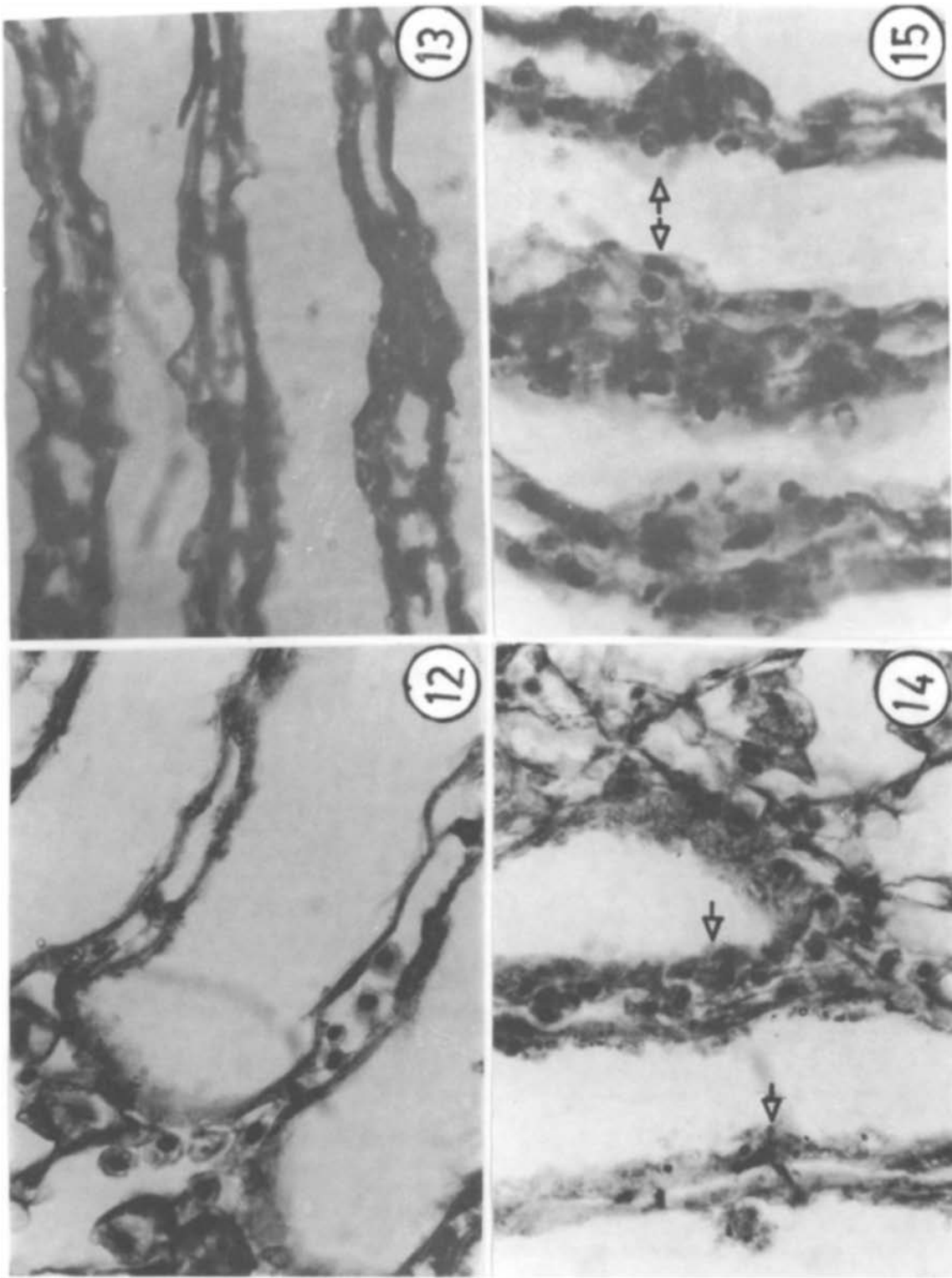
arthropod hemocytes was observed during coagulation (Dumont *et al.* 1966), basement membrane formation (Beaulaton 1968), and wound repair (Lai-Fook 1970). Lai-Fook (1970) noted that the degree of density and homogeneity of the granules was related to the physiological state of the organism. Investigations of Deruby (1918) and Myers and Dewolfa-Glade (1964) on vertebrate cells suggested that responses of degranulation, vacuolization of the cytoplasm and nuclear pyknosis were indicative of cell injury, autolysis, aging or death.

The lamellar pathology of *P. hydrodromous* varied in extent, depending on the sublethal doses of cadmium chloride from the disruption of central cells with agglutination of hemocytes to severe toxic responses of nodular gill disease (NGD) with hemocytic hyperplasia. Investigations of rock crabs *Cancer*



central cells in the lamellae treated with 0.02 μM CdCl_2/L for 30 days ($\times 250$).
11 Agglutination of pleomorphic hyalinocytes and blackened granulocytes (arrow) in the necrotic centers of lamellae treated with 0.05 μM CdCl_2/L for 30 days ($\times 250$)

Figs. 8-9. Histology of normal gills of *P. hydrodromus*. **8** Gill lamellae with normal tissue arrangement ($\times 200$). **9** Hemolymph channel (hc) of lamellae with transverse (tc) and central cells (cc) ($\times 250$)
Figs. 10-11. Gill pathology of *P. hydrodromus* exposed to CdCl_2 . **10** Disruption of



Figs. 12-15. Gill pathology of *P. hydrodromus* exposed to CdCl_2 . **12** Diffuse distension and rupture of hemolymph channel after exposure to $0.25 \mu\text{M CdCl}_2/\text{L}$ ($\times 250$). **13** Nodular gill disease (NGD) and hemocytic exudation (arrow) after exposure to $0.50 \mu\text{M CdCl}_2/\text{L}$ ($\times 250$). **14** Focus of hemocytic hyperplasia (arrow) and sloughing off wall of hemocytes ($\times 250$). **15** Focus of hemocytic hyperplasia (arrow) and sloughing off wall of hemocytes ($\times 250$)

irroratus collected from a sewage disposal site, which polluted with heavy metals showed nodular formations, necrosis, and hemocyte aggregation in the gills (Greig *et al.* 1982). Couch (1978) reported that heavy metal exposure may be one of the predisposing factors for black gill disease in penaeid shrimps. Similarly, Estrella (1984) observed a high incidence of black gill and shell disease in *Homarus americanus* collected from the coast of Massachusetts contaminated with industrial wastes.

In *P. hydrodromous*, desquamation of the upper hyperplastic tissue plaque along with walled off hemocytes was recognized as an important protective response in cadmium extrusion or neutralization. According to Corner and Rigler (1958), many decapod crustaceans were capable of using detoxification and excretory processes to afford some degree of protection against heavy metal pollution. The sloughing off dead cellular material from the gills and body surface were suggested as a response to get rid off cadmium (Eisler 1974). Nimmo *et al.* (1977) stated that cadmium was collected by hemocytes of the shrimp, accumulated in the gills and eliminated by sloughing off gill epithelium. However, whatever may be the adaptive response to metals, the present study suggests the need for investigating in more detail, the role of hemocytes in detoxification and excretion.

Changes in the hemogram and gill pathology of *P. hydrodromous* could quantify the sublethal effects of cadmium chloride. This finding may represent further evidence that cadmium induces nodular gill disease (NGD) in crustaceans.

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