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the irreplaceable image

A case of phagocytic multiple myeloma

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A 52-year old man was admitted to hospital in 1993 complaining of chest pain. A diagnosis of multiple myeloma IgAλ with costal and vertebral localizations was made and the patient was treated with radio- and chemotherapy. In 1996 the patient was readmitted because of persistent severe anemia with a high transfusion need and thrombocytopenia. Bone marrow aspiration showed massive infiltration by plasma cells, sometimes rather immature. Four per cent of these plasma cells demonstrated phagocytosis of erythrocytes (Figures 1 and 2). Hemophagocytosis by myeloma cells is a rare, but well recognized, phenomenon, that may be responsible for the hemolytic anemia observed in cases of multiple myeloma.

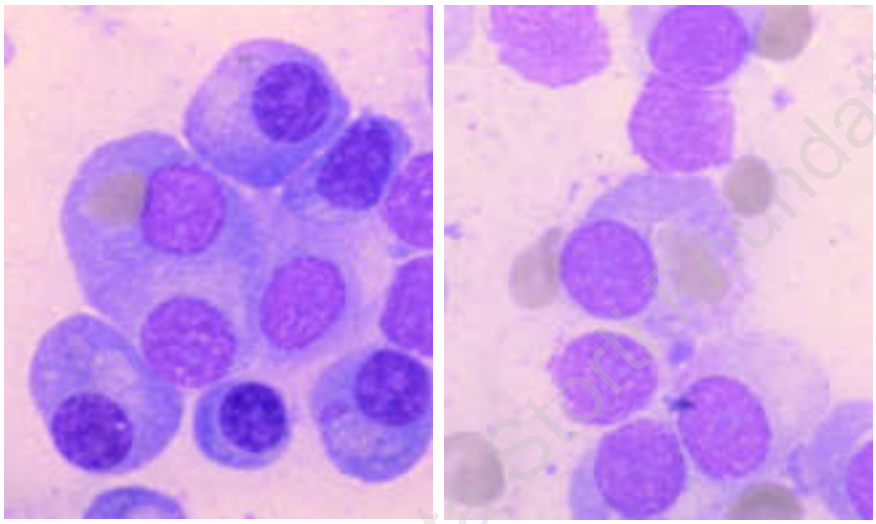

Figure 1. Bone marrow. Phagocytosis of mature erythrocytes by myeloma cells. (MGG stain, x1,200).

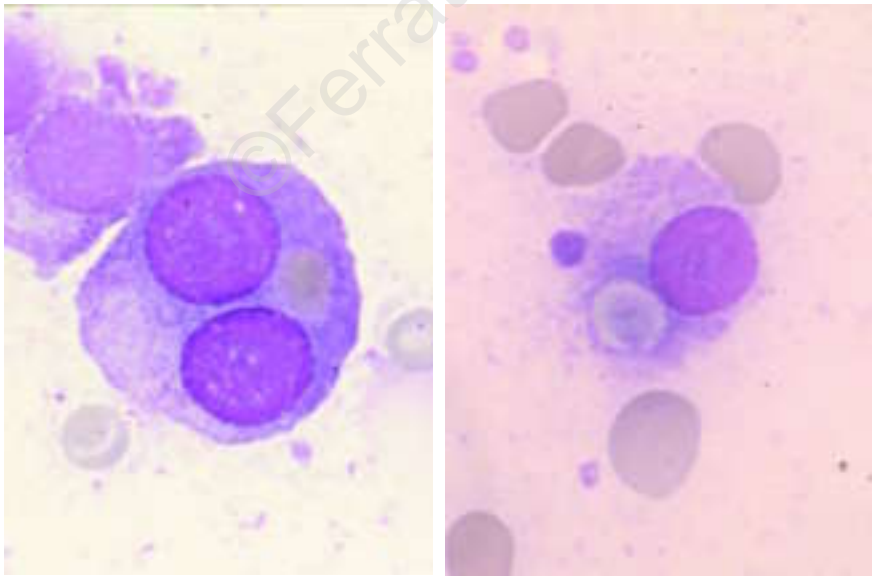

Figure 2. Bone marrow. (Left) Phagocytosis of a red cell by a binucleate plasma cell. (Right) Erythrocyte in an intracytoplasmic vacuole of a plasma cell. (MGG stain, x1,200).

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