Book review: A pattern approach to lymph node diagnosis by Anthony S-Y Leong

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“Look at the pattern!” This almost emotional advice is given to young pathologists who start doing lymph node pathology, especially by Bharat Nathwani, and it is a wise advice. But looking at the pattern is not that easy for the novice. In fact one needs to know a lot and to have quite some experience and understanding to really appreciate the value of looking at the pattern. But how does one get familiar with this approach? Most textbooks on pathology describe the different relevant diseases and in the description the pattern is included. But there are few texts that start with the pattern and go from there to the diagnosis. Anthony S-Y Leong, an experienced hematopathologist from Malaysia, who has also worked in England and Australia has taken up that challenge, and his book, *A pattern approach to lymph node diagnosis*, Springer Verlag, 2011, is a welcome addition to the books that are available for hematopathologists. Of course, lymphoma pathology starts and ends with the WHO book. But how does one get to the right chapter in that book? Anthony S-Y Leong tries to bridge that gap and is certainly, at least partially, successful.

The book starts with an introduction in which the systemic examination of lymph nodes is described followed by cell type identification by morphology and phenotyping and an introduction in the pattern approach. There is also a chapter on the handling of lymph nodes and an extensive chapter on immunohistochemistry and other techniques. Finally in the first part, a description of the normal lymph node is given.

In part two the core of the book is present, starting with a long chapter on nodular infiltrates followed by a chapter on

diffuse infiltrates. Then there is a chapter on defining microscopic features and their meaning, like granulomas, and all kinds of lymph node lesion that are not lymphomas (sarcomas, reactive lesions, infections), a chapter on nodal involvement by leukemias and extranodal lymphomas and finally a chapter on needle core and fine needle aspirations.

It is very clear from reading the book that it is written by someone with great expertise and knowledge of the pitfalls. The data given are up to date and I have not detected mistakes. It is therefore a valuable book to use and find information during the process of evaluating a lymph node. The question is: does it reach its goal, namely that one uses it by analyzing pattern and using the book accordingly? In fact I have noticed that in case I wanted to find something, I mostly used the excellent register of the book and found what I wanted to know. Actually, quite some information is given on more than one spot. This is due to the fact that some lymphomas can have both a diffuse and a nodular growth pattern. But I also must admit that the book was not written for me, an experienced hematopathologist. It is written especially for residents and fellows, general pathologist, and also, according to the back side of the book, hematologists. This latter category seems to me not really benefiting from this book, but residents and fellows may, albeit to a limited extent. I have noticed that the pattern approach, which I think indeed is the best, only works for those pathologists who have already quite some experience and who understand normal and abnormal lymphocytes and their behavior very well.

The book is very richly illustrated, although the images are quite small and not always perfect. This is partly due to the large number of low-power images, which are very difficult to make but which are a really important feature of course if one wishes to illustrate patterns. I would suggest that the images also become available for the buyer on a website so that it can be appreciated better.

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