The Doctors of Wilmington Pathology

CHRISTOPHER D. MCKINNEY, M.D., F.C.A.P., F.A.S.C.P.
Board Certified, Anatomic and Clinical Pathology
Areas of Expertise: Immunohistochemistry, Flow Cytometry, Image Analysis, and Molecular Testing in Neoplastic Diseases

BABAATUNDE A. OLADIJOYE, M.D., F.C.A.P.
Board Certified, Anatomic and Clinical Pathology, Cytopathology
Areas of Expertise: Cytopathology, Breast Pathology, Head / Neck Pathology, and Oral Pathology

CAROLINA M. MONTES, M.D.
Board Certified, Anatomic and Clinical Pathology, Dermatopathology
Areas of Expertise: Dermatopathology, General Surgical Pathology

BRIAN C. SHIRO, M.D., F.C.A.P., F.A.S.C.P.
Board Certified, Anatomic and Clinical Pathology
Areas of Expertise: Gastrointestinal Pathology, Oral Pathology, and Immunohistochemistry

DEBRA BUDNIT NOVOTNY, M.D., F.C.A.P.
Board Certified, Anatomic and Clinical Pathology
Areas of Expertise: Hematopathology, Cytopathology, and Breast Pathology

GREGORY E. STEINKRAUS, PH.D., A.S.M.M.
Diplomate, American Board of Medical Microbiology
Areas of Expertise: Hematopathology, General Surgical Pathology, Oral Pathology, and Immunohistochemistry

CHRISTOPHER D. MCKINNEY, M.D., F.C.A.P., F.A.S.C.P.
Board Certified, Anatomic and Clinical Pathology
Areas of Expertise: Immunohistochemistry, Flow Cytometry, Image Analysis, and Molecular Testing in Neoplastic Diseases

GREGORY E. STEINKRAUS, PH.D., A.S.M.M.
Diplomate, American Board of Medical Microbiology
Areas of Expertise: Hematopathology, General Surgical Pathology, Oral Pathology, and Immunohistochemistry

JOHN F. (JEFF) TURNER, JR., M.D., F.C.A.P.
Board Certified, Anatomic and Clinical Pathology
Hematology Special Qualification
Areas of Expertise: Hematopathology, General Surgical Pathology, and Non-neoplastic Hematopathology

Phone Directory

Main Office ........................................ 910.362.9511
Fax ........................................ 910.362.9512
Patient Billing ................................. 910.202.1727
Cytology ........................................ 910.202.1730
Anatomic ......................................... 910.202.1730
Pathology Reports ......................... 910.202.1722
Client Service .............................. 910.202.1719

The PATH REPORT
The newsletter from Wilmington Pathology Associates

SUMMER 2005

Histologic Dating Of The Endometrium For Infertility Screening...a Thing Of The Past
By Debra B. Novotny, M.D.

Over fifty years ago, Noyes, Hertig and Rock (1) published their landmark article on criteria for histologic dating of the endometrial biopsy in the inaugural issue of Fertility and Sterility, which has continued to be one of the most often cited articles from that journal. Their dating criteria to date have endured as the gold standard among methods in clinical practice for the evaluation of luteal function and for the diagnosis of luteal phase deficiency.

The study design of Noyes et al had a number of flaws. First and most importantly, the tissue samples were largely obtained from infertile women. Second, the postovulatory day of tissue specimens was estimated in retrospect based on a presumed uniform secretory phase of 14 days, with the postovulatory day assigned between biopsy day and the onset of next menses. Several subsequent studies have demonstrated that the normal secretory (luteal) phase does vary in duration. Third, histologic criteria have inherent interpretive subjectivity, such that dating differences within a 2-day interval were subsequently generally considered to be normal and acceptable.

In the past year, investigators from the divisions/departments of Reproductive Endocrinology and Infertility, Obstetrics and Gynecology, and Pathology at UNC-Chapel Hill published a critical re-analysis of these histologic dating criteria (2). Dr. Debra Novotny was the principle designer of the histologic arm of this study, and reviewed the histologic slides in a blinded fashion in conjunction with two other internationally recognized gynecological pathologists. Tissue samples were obtained from 130 healthy fertile volunteers, obtained prospectively, randomized from 1 to 14 days from the midcycle urinary luteinizing hormone (LH) surge. The three pathologists independently scored 32 distinct histologic features in each of the biopsies, and dated the endometrium using traditional histologic criteria.

The results showed that traditional endometrial histologic dating criteria are much less temporally distinct and discriminating than originally described, due to considerable interobserver variability. Neither traditional dating criteria nor any combination of the best performing histologic features could reliably distinguish any specific cycle day or narrow

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In the News

New UNCW Learning Alliance

Wilmington Pathology is pleased to have been selected to serve as an Alliance Partner for a team of UNCW-MMA students. The students will work all day at local companies and attend class in the evening. Wilmington Pathology and other Alliance Partners provide the real life business experience to apply what they learn in the classroom.

Wilmington Pathology benefits from fresh ideas from bright local MMA students and the students benefit from real life business interactions through an analysis of the healthcare industry and by making strategic recommendations for growth and process improvement.

Meet Our Couriers

Our couriers crisscross New Hanover, Brunswick, Pender and Onslow Counties on a daily basis logging over 400 miles a day transporting specimens and supplies between clients and our laboratory. We have four couriers working simultaneously to ensure quick and efficient service. You may see any of them in your office to collect specimens or deliver results. Each of our couriers is dedicated to providing excellent service.

Marsh Watkins celebrated her five-year anniversary with WPA this spring. As a board certified phlebotomist and certified medical assistant, she originally began working for our laboratory. Because Marsh is a people person, she soon welcomed the opportunity to become a courier and have daily contact with our clients. On her regular route, Marsh takes care of our clients whose practices are located near New Hanover Regional Medical Center. As our senior courier, she also handles other aspects of our courier department including the accurate distribution of supplies, patient reports and monitoring the specimen “call-in” phone line.

Vickie Nowell is our courier who truly goes the extra mile. She joined WPA in February 2005 and runs all of our routes as needed. Her background includes working as a courier and service representative for a company that managed transportation for senior citizens so being on the road is nothing new to her. Her energy level and hard work are a wonderful benefit to our laboratory.

Meet Our Couriers

New Home on the Horizon

Early this Fall Wilmington Pathology will be moving to a new location on 17th Street. The 15,000 square foot building will also be the home for NextWave Diagnostic Laboratories. The new facilities will provide patients with improved access and allow the group to implement new technologies and medical advances.

Meet Our Couriers

In New Beginnings

On July 15th, Wilmington Pathology Associates will bid a fond farewell to one of its senior partners, Gregory S. Henderson, M.D., Ph.D. Dr. Henderson joined the practice in 1998 and was instrumental in the development and opening of our independent cytology laboratory in June 2000. He constantly wore two hats. In everything he does and his philosophy has taught us all that what we do—and doing it well—makes a difference to our clients and to their patients. Dr. Henderson has accepted the position of Associate Chairman of the Department of Pathology, Director of Anatomic Pathology, and Director of Laboratory Outreach at Ochsner Clinic Foundation (OCF) in New Orleans effective September 1, 2005. Widely recognized as centers for excellence in research, patient care and education, OCF is a not-for-profit, comprehensive health care system that includes a clinic, hospital, and health plan providing services in over 24 locations throughout Southeast Louisiana with more than 600 physicians in nearly 70 medical specialties. While embarking upon this new venture with his wife, Isabelle, and daughters, Margaux and Ava, he will be also continuing his work with the HPV Foundation he created from the proceeds of his first book, ‘WOMEN AT RISK: The HPV and Cervical Health.” This book explains one of the most dangerous, yet relatively unknown, sexually transmitted diseases: human papillomavirus (HPV), the primary cause of cervical cancer. The foundation promotes awareness locally, nationally and internationally on this epidemic. He will be greatly missed but we wish him well in his new and exciting endeavor.