

Surgical Pearl

Orientation of histopathology specimen: a wall clock idea

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Introduction

It is necessary to orientate the specimens which are sent for histopathological examination. Various publications have dealt with this issue.¹⁻³

We describe a technique for marking the specimen to be sent to histopathological laboratory.

Method

Once the outlines of the excision are determined, three or four sites are marked corresponding to 12, 3, 6 and 9'o clock positions. The excision is done and the wound is managed accordingly.

The histopathology specimen is now stitched using a single stitch at 12'o clock position which corresponds to the upper border of the excision. A double stitch at 3'o clock position and a triple stitch can be applied at 6 or 9'o clock positions. The same plan is marked on the histopathology specimen form. A copy is

attached to operative notes. And the form with specimen is sent to histopathology laboratory.

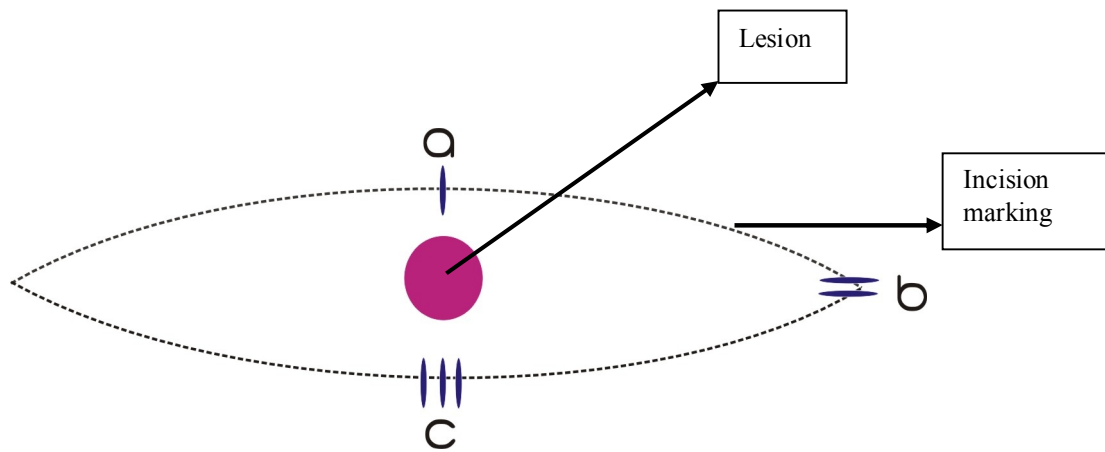
In the laboratory, the pathologist can easily orientate the specimen according to the diagram provided. When the report is prepared, the pathologist can easily comment on the lateral margins (**Figure 1**).

Discussion

There are various techniques to orientate the histopathology specimen. A technique of polaroid photograph was developed by Burns *et al.*¹, but every surgical unit does not have the facility of Polaroid camera available every time in operation room. This technique is not difficult and is very easy to learn once explained even to the junior most member of the team. The copy of the specimen form with the operation notes results in cross-checking the orientation and histopathology report by anyone who opens the operation notes. I have found this technique very easy and is also welcomed by the pathologists.

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a= Marking at 12^o clock, b= Marking at 3^o clock, c= Marking at 6^o clock

Figure 1 Preoperative marking

References

1. Burns A, Adams J, Endersby S. Orientation of histopathology specimens. *Br J Oral Maxillofac Surg* 2004; **42**: 64-65.
2. Bentley PA. A simple specimen mount for the orientation of breast biopsies. *Br J Surg* 1989; **76**: 312.
3. van Netten JP, Racca RL, Armstrong JB *et al*. An apparatus to retain the spatial orientation of breast biopsies. *Ann Coll Pathol* 1989; **2**: 59-62.

28th PAD Conference of Dermatology

November 6-8, 2009

Lahore, Pakistan

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