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Changes in Innervation of Long Bones after Insertion of an Implant: Immunocytochemical Study in Goats with Antibodies to Calcitonin Gene-Related Peptide and B-50/GAP-43

P. Buma, L. Elmans, and *A. B. Oestreicher

Institute of Orthopaedics, Laboratory for Experimental Orthopaedics, Section of Histomorphology, University Hospital Nijmegen, Nijmegen, and *Rudolf Magnus Institute, Utrecht, The Netherlands

Summary: In this study, we describe the distribution of fibres that contain calcitonin gene-related peptide in normal bones and in bones that are remodeling after insertion of an implant. With routine histology and antibodies to calcitonin gene-related peptide, small neural and free-running fibres staining positively for calcitonin gene-related peptide were found in the periosteum, endosteum, and cortical bone of the tibia in the goat. In many cases, the free-running fibres were associated with blood vessels that entered the bone through Volkmann's canals. The endosteal blood supply was destroyed as a result of insertion of the implant. The necrotic bone was no longer innervated, as shown by the lack of staining for the antibodies. At 6 weeks, a repair phase started with revascularization and remodeling of the necrotic endosteal bone. During this repair phase, there was increased innervation with fibres containing calcitonin gene-related peptide in the remodeling cavities at the interface between living and necrotic bone. These fibres ended blindly, with many large varicosities, and could be demonstrated by immunostaining with monoclonal antibodies to B-50/growth associated protein-43, an antibody to outgrowing neuronal fibres. The correlative occurrence between extensive sprouting of fibres containing calcitonin gene-related peptide and the remodeling of necrotic endosteal bone suggests that sensory fibres with calcitonin gene-related peptide have a regulatory role in the control of angiogenesis or of bone remodeling associated with the insertion of an implant, or with both processes.

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It has been well known for several decades that bones and the surrounding soft tissues are innervated (31,32). Immunocytochemistry has shown that different chemically defined types of fibres are involved in the innervation of the skeleton (2,3,7,12,13,19,22,31). It is assumed that the fibres have more than one function, on the basis of experimental evidence, identification of the various neuroactive substances, and knowledge of the sympathetic and sensory origin of the fibres (5,15,17,20,42,54). Innervation may be involved in trophic effects on tissues, regulation of vascularization or bone remodeling, and pain and proprioception (2,3,19,26).

The present study focussed on the changes in the innervation pattern of sensory fibres associated with bone remodeling after insertion of an implant. In bone, the main function of sensory fibres that contain calcitonin gene-related peptide (CGRP) and substance P may be perception of pain (15,16,18,19,24,31,33,40,43). However, it also seems very plausible that CGRP plays

a role in bone remodeling, on the basis of the pattern of innervation of molar teeth (45), the strong inhibitory influence of CGRP on osteoclastic bone resorption (8,57,58), the localization of peripheral CGRP binding sites (34), the effects of chemical sensory denervation, sympathectomy (19), and the proliferation of fibres containing CGRP around fracture sites (27).

The antibody to the B-50/growth associated protein (GAP)-43, which is a neuron-specific protein (29,30,46), may be of special interest in innervation studies. This antibody has been applied to detect outgrowing nerve fibres (48,52,53). A high concentration of B-50/GAP-43 has been found in axonal growth cones during embryonic (37,50) and postnatal development (10,11,39). The expression of B-50/GAP-43 is reinforced following nerve injury (46). Enhanced immunoreactivity to B-50/GAP-43 has been demonstrated in regenerating axons (48,52); thus, the antibody may be of use to demonstrate axonal sprouting (11, 49, 53). The purpose of this study was to describe the changes in the pattern of sensory innervation in bone after insertion of an implant. As an experimental model, we used the tibia of the goat. It has been shown that part of the endosteal blood circulation is de-

Received March 14, 1994; accepted October 3, 1994. Address correspondence and reprint requests to P. Buma at Institute of Orthopaedics, University Hospital Nijmegen, P.O. Box 9101, 6500 HB, Nijmegen, The Netherlands.

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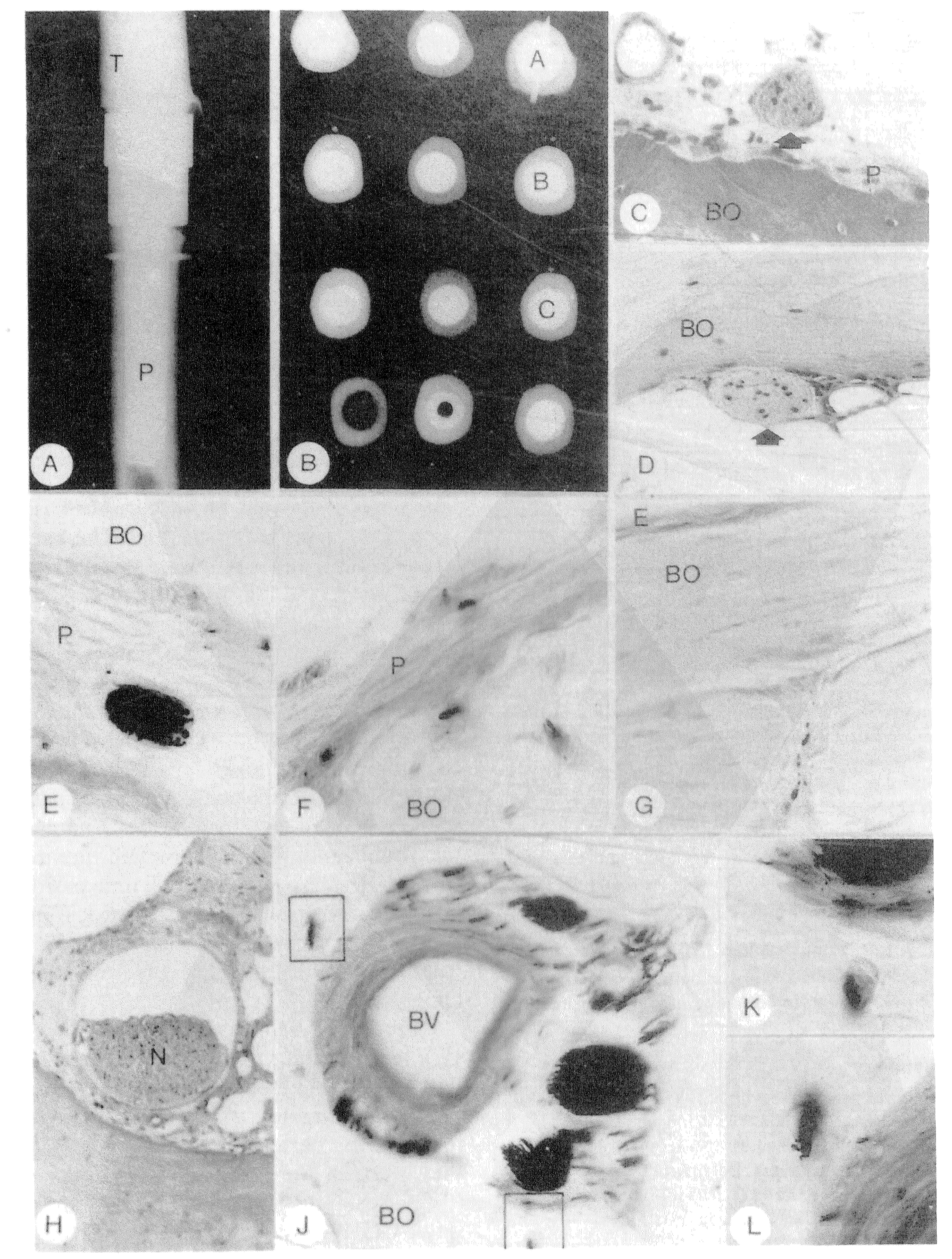


FIG. 1. The tapered part of the implant (P), coated with hydroxyapatite, was press fit into the distal part of the tibin (T) of the goat, and the proximal part was fixed with bone cement (A, x1.1). Thick sections were cut at proximal (A), mid-shaft (B), and distal levels (C) along the implant 1 week (B, x1.1). 6 weeks, and 12 weeks after insertion. In sections of control bones, staining with baematoxylin and cosin (C and D, \times 240) showed small nerves (arrows) in the periosteum (P) and endosteum of the bone (BO), and immunostaining with antibodies to calcitonin gene-telated peptide showed a small nerve (E, \times 240), small bundles of nerve fibres partly in close association with the bone (E, \times 300), and a free-running fibre in Volkmann's canai at an endosteal location (E) (G, \times 270). Low magnification of a section from a control bone stained with baematoxylin and cosin (H, \times 60) showed a rather thick nerve (N) in association with the numeri vessels, which penetrates the bone. Immunostaining with antibodies to B-50/growth associated protein-45 in a section from a control bone (J, \times 7) demonstrated its localization in nerves and free-running fibres in the nutrient canal, Large blood vessels (BV) are penetrating through the nutrient canal into the medullary cavity. In the upper and lower boxed areas (entarged [\times 200] in K and L, respectively), small branches seem to penetrates into the cortical bone.

stroyed after insertion of an implant into the tibia (6); in time, the resulting necrotic bone was partly replaced by new bone as a result of bone remodeling of the necrotic endosteal areas. We do not know whether the remodeled bone becomes reinnervated, how rapidly reinnervation takes place, or what fibres are in-

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volved. In this study, we focussed on fibres containing CGRP and used the antibody to B-50/GAP-43.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Partly noncemented implants were placed in the midshaft of the tibia of the Dutch milk goat (Capra hircus sana). The straight tapered distal part of the implant was coated with a layer of approximately 60 µm plasma-sprayed hydroxyapatite, with a crystalline phase of about 70% (CAM Implant Service, Leiden, The Netherlands). After segmental resection, the proximal part of the implant was fixed with bone cement and the hydroxyapatitecoated distal end was press fit into the distal part of the bone, and they were subsequently coupled with each other (Fig. 1A). During the first 2 days after the operation, the goats were kept in a hammock to prevent early load-bearing. Qualitative evaluation of bone remodeling was performed using sequential fluorochrome labelling with oxytetracycline (for 7 days, beginning shortly after the operation), xylenol orange (for 7 days in the middle of the period), and calcein green (for 7 days directly before death). At 1, 6, and 12 weeks, four animals each were given a lethal dose of pentobarbitone. Immediately afterwards, perfusion was carried out with 4% paraformaldehyde in 0.1 M phosphate buffer, pH 7.4. Each contralateral tibia was used as a control. All of the bones were disarticulated carefully, radiographs were taken, and the bones were fixed for at least another 7 days. A water-cooled saw (WOCO 50P/10; Conrad, Clausthal-Zellerfeld, Germany) was used to cut transverse slices every 3 mm. Radiographs of the slices were taken. The slices then were treated in the following ways. All prosthetic material was removed from the slices by push-out procedures. For routine histology, the slices were decalcified in 25% EDTA under radiographic control, embedded in polymethylmethacrylate, cut into thin sections (7 μ m), and stained with haematoxylin and eosin. For fluorescence microscopy, unstained undecalcified slices, 3 mm thick, were embedded in polymethylmethacrylate and sectioned $(20 \ \mu m)$ on a rotating water-cooled diamond saw (model 1600; Leitz, Wetzlar, Germany). For immunocytochemistry, decalcified slices were transferred to 30% sucrose, deep frozen, and sectioned (80 µm) with a freeze microtome. Sections were collected in Tris buffered saline (0.05 M)Tris, 0.9% NaCl, pH 7.4) for free-floating immunocytochemical processing.

between, and after each incubation step, the sections were washed three times for 20 minutes with fresh Tris buffered saline. All incubations were at room temperature and continuous gentle agitation was used. After the staining procedure, the sections were dehydrated and were mounted with Eukitt (Clichy, France) on gelatin-coated slides and protected with coverslips.

All of the sections were investigated and photographed by photomicroscopy (Zeiss II; Zeiss Instruments, Oberköchen, Germany). At each time period, remodeling cavities were quantitated in three equidistant cross sections (proximal, midshaft, and distal) of each tibia by direct light microscopic examination, at a magnification of $\times 50$. Neuronal varicosities were quantitated in four random areas in the remodeling area of the cortical bone with a surface area of 1 mm², at a magnification of $\times 100$.

RESULTS

The sections did not show any artifacts due to the freezing procedure. The fibres labeled with peroxidaseantiperoxidase could be recognized easily and were stained throughout the sections. The background immunostaining was very low or absent. The controls for specificity of the method (omission of the first incubation step and incubation with preimmune serum) were completely negative. After preadsorption of the CGRP antiserum with the peptide, specific immunostaining was completely absent. The decalcification procedure did not have an effect on the intensity of the immunostaining (5).

The immunocytochemical staining pattern and the sections stained with haematoxylin and cosin enabled the visualization of the gross and fine innervation of the tibia. In all specimens at all time periods, two types of fibres were observed: fairly thick fibres in nerves, showing no varicose structures (Fig. 1E and J), and free-running fibres, which generally had a varicose appearance (Figs. 1G and 2G). Fibres were stained with CGRP in all nerves (Fig. 1E). Free-running fibres were located in the periosteum of the bone (Fig. 1F). Irrespective of the cross section investigated, many small nerves always were found in the periosteum of the tibia (Fig. 1C); often, they were in the soft tissues in direct contact with the periosteum. Small branches of these nerves, or single CGRP-positive fibres, entered the cortical bone and usually were associated with blood vessels located in Volkmann's canals (Fig. 1F). A fairly thick nerve or thick branch of nerves entered the medullary space through the nutrient canal (Fig. 1H-L). Small branches of the nutrient nerve entered the cortical bone (Fig. 1J-L). The rather thick nerve associated with the nutrient blood vessels branched into smaller nerves as soon as it entered the medullary canal. Small nerves were located in an endosteal position (Fig. 1D), from where many single fibres or small groups of fibres entered the cortical bone (Fig. 1G). In the control bones, no remodeling cavities were present. The mean (±SD) number of nerve varicosi-

Immunocytochemistry

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> Immunostaining was performed with polyclonal rabbit antibodies to CGRP (1:6,000) (RAS 6009-N; Peninsula Laboratories, Belmont, CA, U.S.A.), monoclonal antibodies to B-50/GAP-43 (1:4,000) (NM4; Innogenetics, Ghent, Belgium) (38), and polyclonal antibodies to B-50/GAP-43. The specificity of the antibodies to CGRP (5) and B-50 (10,11,39) has been tested previously. The specificity of the antisera was determined with use of the conventional method of substituting normal rabbit preimmune or mouse serum for the primary antiserum and omitting the primary antiserum step. The specificity of the CGRP antiserum was tested further by preadsorption of 5 ml of the diluted antiserum with 0.1 mg of CGRP (6009; Peninsula Laboratories). The sections were stained overnight with the antiserum, stained for 2 hours with peroxidase-conjugated swine immunoglobulins to rabbit immunoglobulins or with peroxidase-conjugated rabbit immunoglobulins to mouse immunoglobulins (1:75) (Dakopatts, Glostrup, Denmark), and stained for 10 minutes with 0.04% 3,3-diaminobenzidine-4-hydrochloride (Merck, Darmstadt, Germany), 0.1% nickel ammonium sulphate, and 0.003% H₂O₂ in 0.05M Tris buffer (pH 7.6). All dilutions of antibodies were made in Tris buffered saline to which 0.5% bovine serum albumin, 0.5% Triton X-100, and 1% normal goat serum were added. Before,

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ties was 18.4 ± 8.2 per sampling area, all located in insertion of the implant on bone, as the details of histological reactions have been published elsewhere. Only a brief description is given of the effects of the (6). Clinically, the goats functioned well. At 3 weeks, (6).

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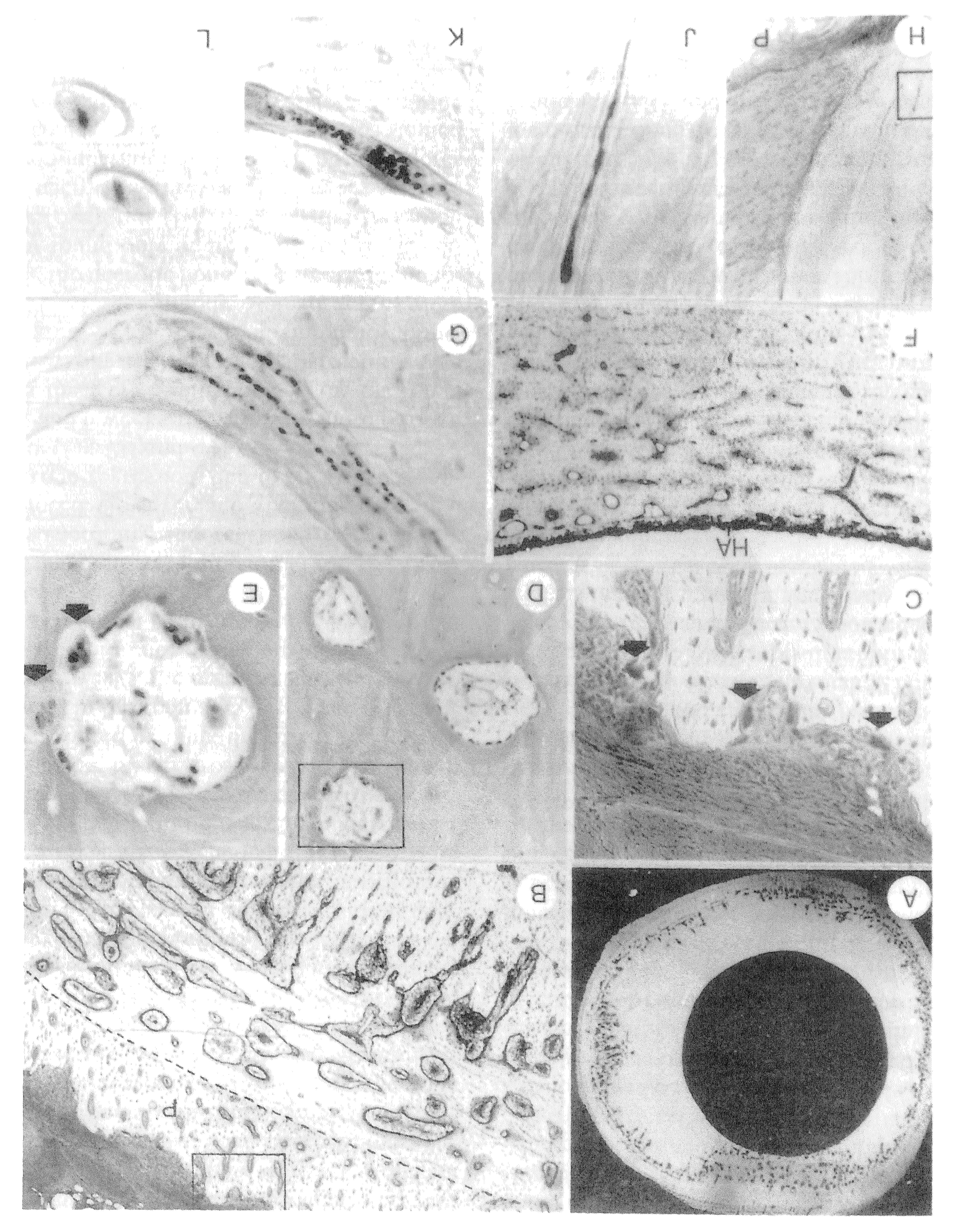


FIG. 2. A: Radiograph (×2) of a 100 µm thick section, after removal of the prosthetic material, taken 6 weeks after the operation for showing the periosteal reaction

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the limb with the implant could be loaded normally. Immediately after insertion, there were no significant gaps between the implant and the cortical bone (Fig. 1A and B). At 3 weeks, the first signs of creeping substitution of the necrotic cortical bone were found. At 6 weeks, radiographs and histology showed sequential osteoclastic porosis and new bone formation in the necrotic bone (Fig. 2A and B). This process of creeping substitution (Fig. 2D and E) started at the transition between living peripheral and endosteal necrotic bone and moved toward the implant. Where the endosteal layer of necrotic bone was relatively thin, the first bone ingrowth reached the hydroxyapatite layer around the implant at 6 weeks (6). At 6 weeks, the mean number $(\pm SD)$ of remodeling cavities in the tibia was 459 ± 89 per cross section. The remodeling process resulted in a mixture of vital remodeled bone embedded in the remnants of the necrotic bone (Fig. 1F). At 12 weeks, the creeping substitution had reached the circumference of the implant surface and new bone was in direct contact with the hydroxyapatite layer (Fig. 1F). Periosteal reactions were moderate (Fig. 2B). Proximal to the osteotomy, the reactions were slightly more pronounced. However, at 6 weeks the periosteal reactions were in regression, due to periosteal osteoclastic activity (Fig. 2B and C). At 1 week and 6 weeks, there was no more positive staining with the CGRP antiserum in the endosteal necrotic bone. Apparently, the neural structures also had disappeared, as there was no immunostaining for the B-50/GAP-43 antibody. Stained nerves were found outside the necrotic bone. At 6 weeks, immunoreactivity was found only in areas where vascularization had been restored (Fig. 2G). At the transition between the necrotic and revascularizing areas, there was increased innervation with CGRP-positive fibres (Fig. 2K). In contrast to control bone, in which stained fibres were found only occasionally, staining with the CGRP antibodies in bones with an implant revealed many varicose fibres in almost all of the remodeling cavities. In the sampling areas, 23.4 ± 5.2 remodeling cavities were found, and they contained 483 \pm 79.5 neural varicosities (a mean of 21 varicosities per cavity). Fibres immunostained for the B-50/GAP-43 antibody were at the same location and had the same morphology. Occasionally, bludgeon-like structures were associated with blood vessels that entered the bone (Fig. 2H and J). The blindly ending thick parts of the structures always were directed toward the implant. They strongly resembled growth cones that have been found during embryonal development of the pyramidal tract (11) and were present only at 6 weeks. At 12 weeks, the proliferated CGRP-positive fibres had disappeared and the preoperative situation had been restored. The bone around the implant had become reinnervated with sparse CGRP-stained fibres (Fig. 1L), and there were no longer any growth cones.

DISCUSSION

Insertion of an implant into the tibia of the goat had distinct effects on bone remodeling and the pattern of sensory innervation. We observed initial degeneration of endosteal bone innervation, followed by proliferation of CGRP-positive fibres during creeping substitution of necrotic bone. To date, changes in the innervation pattern of bone after pathological disorders have been described in the human femoral head after arthrosis (41) and in the innervation of the arthrotic knee with fibres containing substance P and CGRP in humans (56) and in mice (5). In addition, it has been demonstrated in humans (13,36) and rats (25) that, in the presence of arthritis, the local levels of substance P and CGRP in the fibres may be depleted. Recently Hukkanen et al. (27) described the proliferation of CGRP-positive fibres periosteally around fracture sites. To our knowledge, the current study is the first report on the changes in innervation patterns in cortical bone associated with the insertion of an implant. On the basis of the present observations, it seems very plausible that the innervation of long bones is associated strongly with this vascularity. This means that endosteal necrosis induced by endosteal devascularization always is associated with necrosis of the accompanying nerve supply. The repair phase, in which necrotic bone is revascularized by peripheral blood vessels, also is a phase in which peripheral fibres. reinnervate the cortical bone. This idea is supported by the presence of the B-50/GAP-43-positive structures that were found at the interface between the living and necrotic bone, particularly after 6 weeks, when revascularization and creeping substitution of the neerotic bone took place. The immunostaining patterns for CGRP and B-50 that were observed after 6 weeks were morphologically similar to those for the growth cones of the regenerating sciatic nerve (52)and those reported in the developing pyramidal tract (10,11,28). Although the exact nature of these structures cannot be judged by use of light microscopy alone, it seems likely that axonal sprouts, which reinnervate necrotic bone, are formed during the repair phase.

Studies on the distribution of CGRP immunoreac-

tivity in many species (2,14,23,51) have strongly suggested that, in a large proportion of sensory fibres. CGRP is co-localized with substance P. Fibres containing CGRP and substance P may be the most important ones to transduct nociceptive impulses to the spinal cord (15,24,43,56), but other types of fibre also may be involved (17). However, the function of CGRPpositive fibres in the tibia of the goat should be in-

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terpreted with great care, because it is not known whether all fibres demonstrated in the present study originated from primary sensory neurons. Both physiological and anatomical tracer studies with horseradish peroxidase have shown that part of the innervation of the lower extremity is of sympathetic origin (17,54). Moreover, careful comparison of the number of articular afferents that display a nociceptive function, as determined by electrophysiological studies, and the proportion of fibres containing substance P or CGRP in the medial articular nerve indicates that, at most, only 30% of the nociceptive-specific articular afferents contain substance P or CGRP, or both. Thus, if the CGRP-positive fibres in the present study were of sensory origin, other undetected fibres also may be involved in the perception of pain. Therefore, detailed tracer studies are needed to evaluate the exact nature. of the fibres demonstrated in the present study. Bearing this in mind, it can be speculated that the pain in the middle of the thigh that sometimes occurs after the insertion of a noncemented prosthesis (55) is mediated by fibres containing CGRP. Although it is not known if CGRP can be released from the varicosities into the surrounding tissues, a local efferent function of fibres containing CGRP also seems plausible. CGRP may be involved in the regulation of vascular sprouting and the stimulation of angiogenesis or in the regulation of osteoclast and osteoblast activity, or it may be involved in all of these. Its involvement in the regulation of osteoclast and osteoblast activity seems to be the most plausible. Bone architecture is a result of continuous modeling and remodeling of the cortical and trabecular components of bone. It generally is assumed that the mechanical environment is a major determinant of the physiological behaviour of mammalian cancellous and cortical bone, in such a way that the bone structure is always optimal for the prevailing mechanical environment. However, mechanical stimuli are mediated by biological factors that stimulate or inhibit cells involved in the alteration of bone stock. Very little is known about the nature of the chemical factors involved in these regulatory processes of cellular activity during bone remodeling. Prostaglandins may be involved in bone formation, but the source is not yet known (1). Localization and in vitro studies have supported the view that the innervation of bone not only plays a sensory role but also may be involved in bone metabolism. Substance P can stimulate bone resorption by inducing the macrophage-mediated release of interleukin-1 (29) and tumor necrosis factor- α (34). In addition, it may mediate the release of oxygen derivatives, which also may stimulate bone resorption (9,44). With respect to CGRP, the pattern of innervation of molar teeth (45) strongly suggests that it has a role in mineralization. Furthermore, in in vitro exper-

iments, it has been found that besides having a vasodilatory action (4,47), CGRP also exhibits a strong inhibitory influence on osteoclastic bone resorption (8,57,58). Mantyh et al. (35) found peripheral CGRP binding sites, which suggests the presence of CGRP receptors. It has been known for some time that vasoactive intestinal peptide has a very strong stimulatory action on bone resorption (21).

In conclusion, after insertion of an implant into the tibia of the goat, necrosis and subsequent dynamic neural sprouting and reinnervation associated with the process of creeping substitution of the necrotic bone were observed. The exact functional relationship between innervation of bone and bone remodeling remains to be clarified.

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