

CELL CULTURING OF SWINE AORTIC
SMOOTH MUSCLE CELLS

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by

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Accepted by the faculty of the School of Sciences and Mathematics, Morehead State University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Science degree.

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ABSTRACT

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SMOOTH MUSCLE CELLS

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Presently there are many possible causes of atherosclerosis being studied, and smooth muscle cell cultures can be a very important tool in the study of the disease. Smooth muscle cells were obtained from swine abdominal aorta and the cells were cultured under sterile procedure.

Two methods of culturing were included, the explant method and the enzyme method; of the two, the explant method was found more efficient under the conditions of this study. Methods of culturing and sterile procedure are emphasized.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| Item or Chapter | Page |
|---|------|
| a. LIST OF TABLES | vi |
| b. LIST OF FIGURES | vii |
| I. INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| II. MATERIALS AND METHODS | 6 |
| Removal of Abdominal Aorta | 6 |
| Cell Culturing | 7 |
| Explant Method of Culturing Smooth Muscle Cells | 9 |
| Chamley's Method of Culturing Smooth Muscle Cells (Enzyme Dispersal) | 10 |
| Incubator | 11 |
| III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION | 13 |
| IV. LITERATURE CITED | 22 |
| V. APPENDIX | 25 |

LIST OF TABLES

| Table | Page |
|---|------|
| I. Medium Components for Swine Aortic Smooth Muscle Culture | 8 |
| II. Constituents of Dulbecco's Modified Eagle Medium | 25 |

LIST OF FIGURES

| Figure | Page |
|--|------|
| 1. Single incubator contained in a Psycrotherm incubator | 11 |
| 2. Double incubator design contained in the Psycrotherm incubator | 12 |
| 3. A photograph indicating proliferating smooth muscle cells (SMC) growing from an explant (arrow) and a few isolated smooth muscle cells at the bottom of the picture (100 x).. | 14 |
| 4. Photograph of a pellet of dedifferentiated smooth muscle cells (SMC) after dislodging the cells with trypsin. Note the arrow indicating single cells (300 x)..... | 15 |
| 5. Photograph of a single dedifferentiated smooth muscle cell (SMC at 450 x)..... | 16 |
| 6. Photograph of sections of two dedifferentiated smooth muscle cells (SMC at 700 x)..... | 17 |

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The "response to injury" hypothesis of atherosclerosis began with the work of Virchow (Ross and Glomset, 1976; Goldstein, et al., 1977). Presently, there are many possible causes of the disease being studied, and many factors investigated that may effect the development of the process once it is initiated. The cause for the initial damage to the endothelium of the artery may vary, however once the endothelium is damaged, the wall of the vessel becomes much more permeable to plasma constituents which enter the intima and smooth muscle cells in the media. As a result, these cells begin to proliferate at a much faster rate than normal (Ross and Glomset, 1973 and 1976; Yeung, 1976).

Since smooth muscle cell proliferation is a main component observed in the development of atherosclerosis, smooth muscle cell culturing can be a very important tool in the study of the disease. The cultures provide a very effective way of isolating one of the components of the lesion and studying it in detail; thereby eliminating, or holding constant, some of the many variables involved.

The method of using smooth muscle cell cultures to test for causative agents of the disease is a good start,

but not definitive proof of cause since whether or not smooth muscle cells in vitro react to stimuli in the same fashion as cells in vivo is debatable. Ross (1971) and Brown, et al., 1976 noted that cultured and subcultured cells retain the same characteristics of differentiated smooth muscle cells. Chamley, et al., (1977) however, found that cells from primary cultures remain differentiated only for about nine days and the cells could no longer be induced to contract after nine days. Also, none of the subcultures could be induced to contract, therefore he concludes they were not differentiated smooth muscle cells. Separate studies by Blose, et al., (1975) and Fowler, et al., (1977) also support Chamley's results. The studies of Chamley, et al., (1977) also show that dedifferentiated cells do not stain with antibodies against myosin. These cells also tend to have much more of the cellular organelles usually present during mitotic activity, such as ribosomes, rough endoplasmic reticulum, mitochondria and golgi complexes (Chamley-Campbell, et al., 1979).

Several substances have been shown to increase proliferation of smooth muscle cells by the method of cell culturing, such as hyperlipemic serum (Mahley, et al., 1977; Chen, et al., 1977; Coltoff-Schiller, et al., 1976), insulin (Ledet, 1976), and platelet factor (Chamley-Campbell, et al., 1979). The exact nature of the platelet

growth factor has not been determined, although Ross and Glomset, (1976) discovered that by adding it to smooth muscle cell cultures the cells showed a great increase in rate of growth. They state that the platelet factor is non-dialyzable, relatively heat stable, and probably basic (Ross, et al., 1977); adding that it is possibly derived from the pituitary gland, taken up by platelets and concentrated in granules or synthesized in the megakaryocyte during development (Antoniades and Scher, 1977). Holmsen and Day, (1970) suggest this factor includes serotonin and adenine nucleotides. The platelet factor does require plasma constituents to induce the completion of more than one mitotic cycle (Vogel, et al., 1978; Ross, et al., 1974).

Chamley's method of cell culturing uses collagenase and elastase, versus the explant method used by Ross and others. It is possible that the use of these enzymes alters the physiological state of the cells, for this reason both methods were used in this study. It should be emphasized that it is likely that cells in culture do not react exactly the same as cells in vivo, therefore one may not always directly relate the results; however finding a significant increase in the rate of growth in cultures is certainly a good indication that this may occur in vivo and therefore greater investigation of that

factor is warranted.

Swine were selected as a model system for several reasons: a) Their cardiovascular system is basically the same as in humans. b) The distribution of coronary arteries of swine is like that of humans. c) Changes produced by growth and the aging process that lead to atherosclerosis are also very similar in human and swine aortas (Ratcliffe and Lunginbuhl, 1971; Jarmolych, et al., 1968). d) Many species transport their cholesterol primarily as HDL, these species are resistant to atherosclerosis; however a few species such as humans, most swine, and monkeys carry much of their cholesterol in the bloodstream as LDL and are susceptible to the disease process (Nicolosi, et al., 1977).

Male animals were used because several studies indicate that the male sex hormones may affect the development of atherosclerosis (Khan, et al., 1977). In a study by Fisher-Dzoga, et al., (1974) the addition of estrogen to rabbit aortic smooth muscle cells in culture inhibited the proliferative effects of hyperlipemic serum.

The aortic media was used to provide the smooth muscle cells necessary to start the cultures because it is entirely made up of smooth muscle cells (Ross and Glomset, 1976).

This study involved the isolation of swine smooth muscle cells by the enzyme dispersal and explant methods. The investigation also included an analysis of the problems of culturing these smooth muscle cells, particularly with respect to pH changes, and contamination by bacteria and fungi.

CHAPTER II

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Removal of Abdominal Aorta

Smooth muscle cell cultures were prepared from the abdominal aorta of healthy, 8 to 10 week old, Yorkshire swine that had been fed a normal diet of Purina Pig Chow. They were chloroformed and the aortic segment surgically removed under a laminar flow laboratory hood. All instruments used were sterilized at 122°C for 30 minutes. The surgical procedure involved cleaning the skin area with 70% ethanol, and making the initial incision with a scalpel without penetrating into the peritoneal cavity. The peritoneum was then cleansed; entrance into the abdominal cavity was then performed with sterile instruments.

The abdominal aorta was clamped on both sides with hemostats, and scissors were used to remove a piece of abdominal aorta 5 to 7.5 cm long. The aortic section was placed on a clean culture dish containing culture medium. The fat was removed, the portion of aorta rinsed three times in culture medium and then divided into two segments of equal size. One of these segments was maintained in culture medium for 2 to 3 hours while the explants were prepared; subsequently this segment was used to pre-

pare cultures as described by Chamley (1977).

Cell Culturing

The following procedures are essentially those of Ross (1971), Brown, et al., (1976), Mahley, et al., (1977), Fowler, et al., (1977), and Chamley, et al., (1977). Care was taken to clean all work areas, and sterilize all instruments and glassware to avoid culture contamination. Glassware was cleaned with a solution of concentrated nitric acid (20 mL) and sulfuric acid (1 L), then it was well rinsed and soaked in a solution of sodium bicarbonate to neutralize the surface (Swim, personal communication). The medium was sterilized by filtering it through a disposable millipore filter (Millipore Corp.), 25 mm in diameter and with a pore size of 0.22 μm , into a sterile culture medium bottle. Sterile disposable Falcon culture dishes (60 mm x 15 mm) and 30 mL sterile Falcon flasks were used. Pipettes (with cotton plugs), centrifuge tubes, stoppered bottles for storage of culture medium, forceps and razor blades were also sterilized.

Culture medium was prepared within 24 hours prior to use. The components and proportions are listed in Table 1, and they were modified from Ross (1971), Fowler, et al., (1977), Brown, et al., (1976) and Sisken (personal communication). This medium was used to rinse the tissue

Table I. Medium Components for Swine Aorta Smooth Muscle Culture.

| Type of Constituents | mL of constituent in 100 mL of medium |
|---|--|
| ¹ Dulbecco's Modified Eagle Medium | 88.5 cc |
| Fetal Bovine Serum | 10.0 cc |
| MEM Nonessential Amino Acid Solution | 1.0 cc |
| Penicillin-Streptomycin Solution (5000 units of each per mL) | 0.7 cc |
| ² Dilute HCl | added until pH of the medium reaches 7.1 or 7.2. |
| ³ Fungizone-Amphotericin B (250 mcg/mL) | 25 μ g |

¹The constituents of Dulbecco's Modified Eagle Medium are given in Table II (Appendix).

²The dilute solution was prepared with 0.5 mL of concentrated HCl to 20 mL of triple distilled water and then sterilized.

³Added to only half of the cultures.

removed from the swine and to culture the cells. Fungizone was added to half of the cultures and compared with cultures without it. Fungizone is used by Fowler, et al., (1977) but not used by most other workers in the field. Prepared culture medium was stored at 4 to 6°C.

Explant Method of Culturing Smooth Muscle Cells

The section of aorta was cut longitudinally, then the intima, adventitia, and part of the outer media were removed by stripping it with forceps and a scalpel. The remaining layer of the aortic media was washed three times in culture medium and then divided with a sterile razor blade into pieces about 0.5 to 1.0 mm square (Ross, 1971; Brown, et al., 1976). Several small grids were made on the bottom of each culture dish with a scalpel; a piece of tissue was then placed on each grid (Swim, personal communication). To avoid dislocation of the explants when transferring the dishes to the incubator, one or two drops of culture medium were carefully added to each section to keep it moist. The culture dishes were then transferred to an incubator, filled with 1.5 mL of culture medium and then perfused with a 95% O₂ and 5% CO₂ gas mixture for approximately 30 minutes. They were maintained in a moist air Psychrotherm environmental incubator (see pages 11 and 12) with a 95% O₂ and 5% CO₂ gas mixture until

confluence, which took approximately 35 to 40 days. The culture medium was changed every other day.

Chamley's Method of Culturing Smooth Muscle Cells
(Enzyme Dispersal)

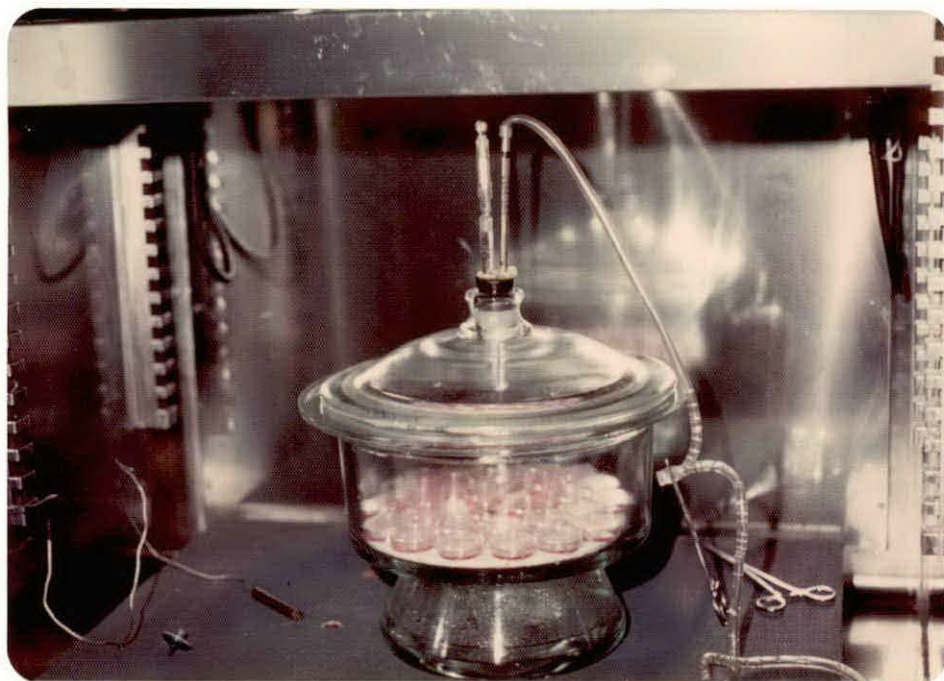
In this method, described by Chamley, et al., (1977) the piece of aorta was stripped of its adipose tissue, everted, sealed at both ends with a sterile clip and immersed in a collagenase (1 mg/mL) solution for 30 minutes. Then the segment was removed and rinsed in trypsin (1.25 mg/mL) twice, leaving it immersed for 3 minutes each time, at 37°C to remove the endothelium. The vessel was then placed in a 4 mL solution of collagenase (1 mg/mL) and elastase (0.5 mg/mL), in a 1:1 ratio, for two hours with occasional gentle agitation. The vessel was removed, the solution placed in sterile test tubes and centrifuged at 1500 rpm (5422 g's) for 6 minutes. The supernatant was discarded, the pellet redissolved in 3 mL of culture medium (Chamley, et al., 1977). The culture was placed in a flask, loosely capped and left in the moist air incubator with a 95% O₂ and 5% CO₂ gas mixture for two hours. Then the cap was tightened.

The culture medium was changed every other day and perfused with the 95% O₂ and 5% CO₂ gas mixture each time. The cultures were grown to confluency.

Incubator

The dessicator-incubator which was designed and used in the Psycrotherm incubator is illustrated in figure 1. It illustrates the inlet pipette for the gas mixture introduction into the dessicator and an exhaust pipette for the gas mixture. Both were only opened for about 30 minutes after opening the dessicator to let the gas mixture perfuse the cultures.

Figure 1. Single incubator contained in a Psycrotherm incubator



The next illustration is basically the same design as figure 1 but provides for an additional incubator to be used. The extra incubator provided a type of isolation chamber for cultures that were suspected of being contaminated. The chambers were necessary for two purposes; one, to retain the gas mixture and the other to retain the air mixture and thus prevent evaporation of the culture medium.

Figure 2. Double incubator design contained in the Psycrotherm incubator.



RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Cell growth and proliferation of swine smooth muscle cells in primary culture was obtained. The first time growth was obtained, the cultures were contaminated by bacteria very early and the proliferation was minimal (growth was confirmed by Ann Brian - Dr. Swim's laboratory at University of Kentucky). The second time, the cultures did proliferate for four weeks without contamination. This was confirmed by observation with an inverted phase microscope.

Photographs in figures 3, 4, 5, and 6 illustrate the growth of smooth muscle cells in primary culture after four weeks. Smooth muscle cells must be stained with labelled smooth muscle myosin to conclusively prove that the cells are in a dedifferentiated state (Groschel-Stewart, et al., 1975; Blose, et al., 1975). This study did not include myosin staining of the cells in culture. However, since the cells in culture were proliferating it can be assumed that these cells are in the dedifferentiated state, because this is a prerequisite for the cells to be in a mitotic state.

The rate of proliferation was not as rapid as the rate reported in previous studies by Ross and Glomset, (1973 and 1976) and Chamley, et al., (1977). The constit-

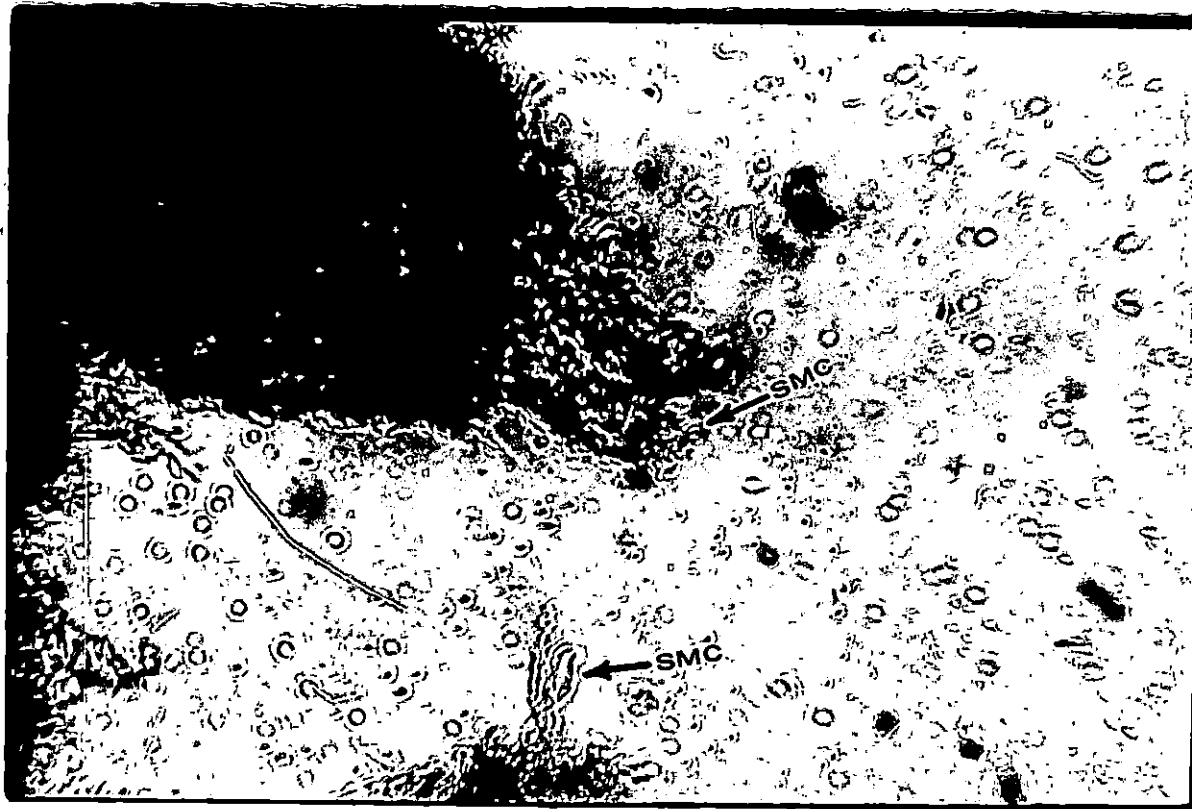


Figure 3. A photograph indicating proliferating smooth muscle cells (SMC) growing from an explant (arrow) and a few isolated smooth muscle cells at the bottom of the picture (100 x).

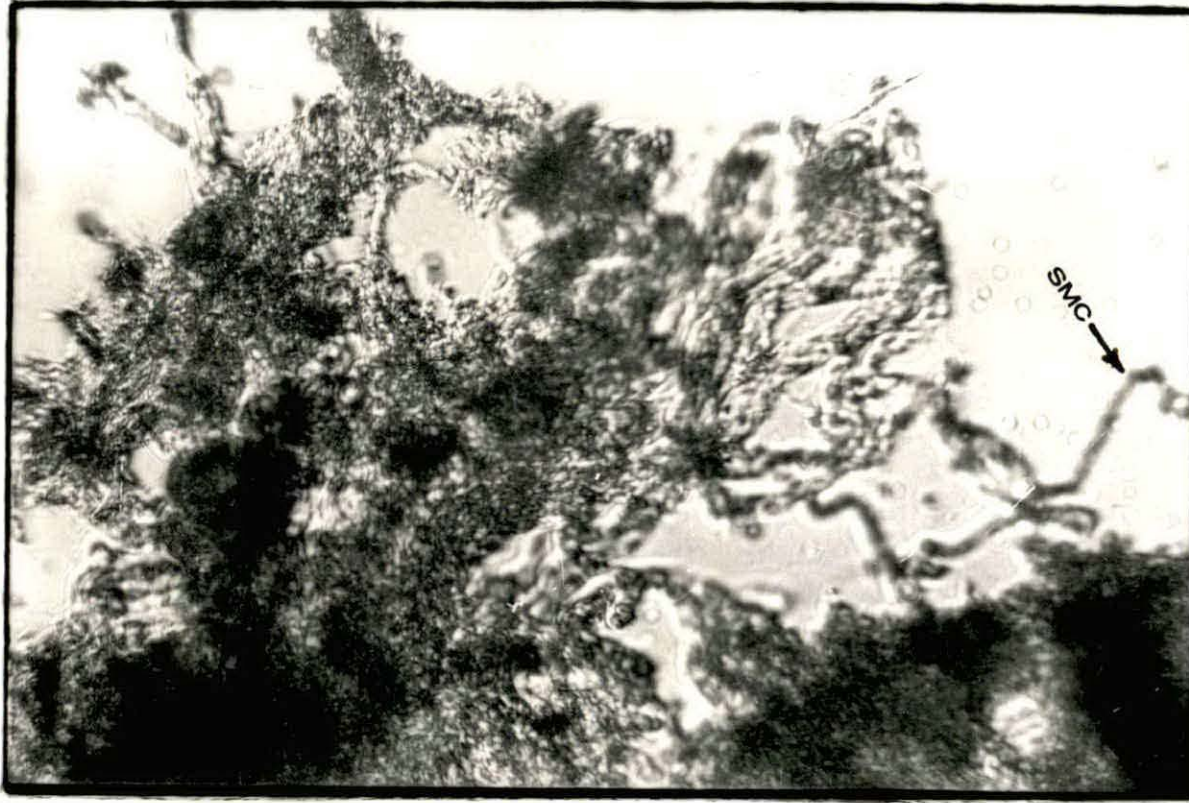


Figure 4. Photograph of a pellet of dedifferentiated smooth muscle cells (SMC) after dislodging the cells with trypsin. Note the arrow indicating single cells (300 x).

at

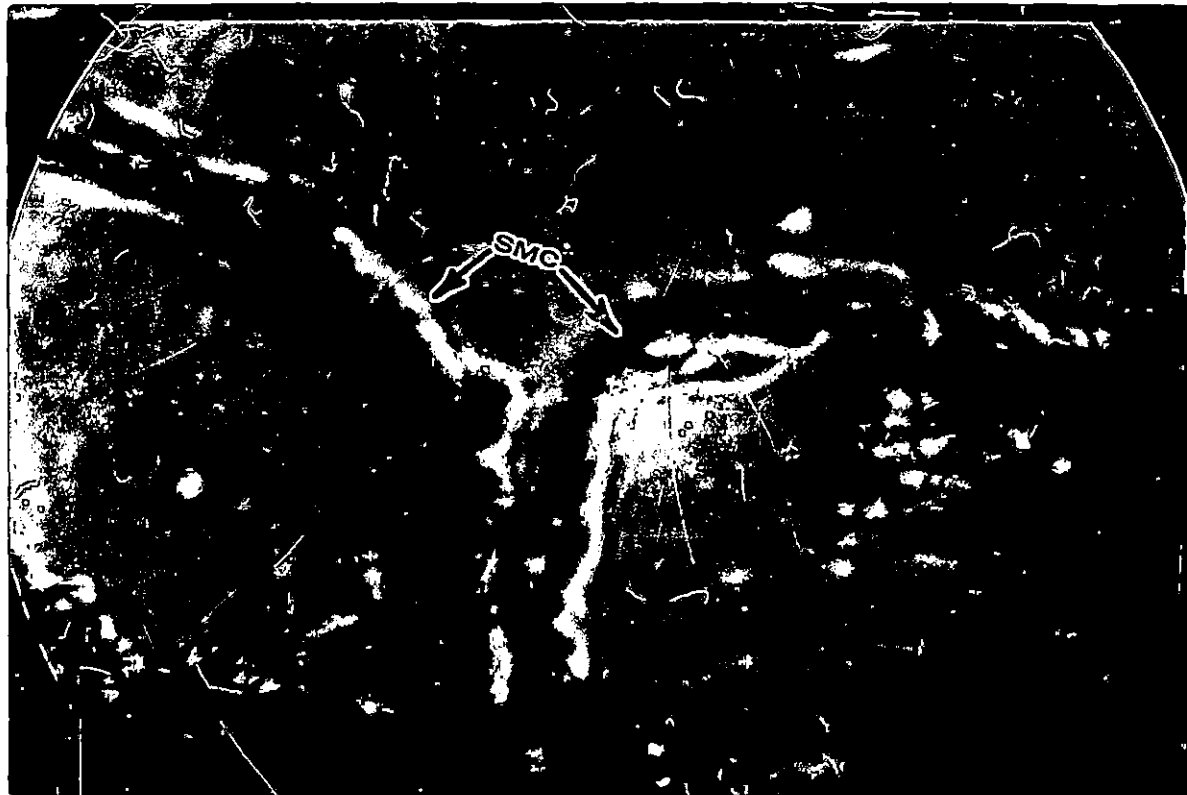


Figure 6. Photograph of sections of two dedifferentiated smooth muscle cells (SMC at 700 x).

uents used in the culture medium were the same as those used by the studies just mentioned. The slower rate of growth may have involved an inability to maintain a constant pH of 7.4. The pH of the medium immediately before its addition to the cultures was between 7.0 and 7.1. Exposure of the culture medium to atmosphere would change the pH to 7.4 - 7.5 before it was completely perfused with the 95% O₂ and 5% CO₂ mixture that maintained a fairly constant pH. At times the pH would change to 7.7 to 7.8 before it would come to equilibrium. This change of pH did not result in necrosis of the smooth muscle cells; however, it is likely that the change in pH would affect them enough to delay mitotic events. Although the pH did change the cells remained alive. Trypan blue, a vital stain, was used to verify that the cells remained alive throughout the entire period of incubation. This stain is not internalized by living cells. Methylene blue, another vital stain, which is internalized by living cells, was also used, and indicated that the cells were alive.

The grids on the bottom of the culture dishes, were effective in the attachment of explants. Yet this did present some minor difficulty in trying to microscopically distinguish between the grid scratches and cells growing out of the explant. This difficulty was alleviated by gently swirling the culture medium under an inverted

microscope and producing movement of the attached cells. After a few days this was not necessary since the cells could be seen growing out of the grids, and were easily distinguished.

The size of the cells seen was from 120 μm to about 190 μm in length, this is in agreement with the 100 μm to 200 μm in length reported in the literature (Chamley-Campbell, *et al.*, 1979).

The main problem in culturing the cells was preventing bacterial and fungal contamination. Penicillin, Streptomycin and Fungizone were only efficient when very sterile procedure was followed and the culture medium was filtered before adding it to the cell cultures. The cultures did become detectively contaminated with bacteria and fungi within approximately ten hours. This probably occurred because the millipore filter did not function properly. If the temperature of the autoclave used to sterilize the millipore filter is only 3 to 4 $^{\circ}\text{C}$ higher than the required temperature, the filter may shrink. The temperature of the autoclave used to sterilize the filters was about 6 $^{\circ}\text{C}$ higher than recommended; this may have allowed the passage of microscopic organisms into the culture medium. In one of the experiments Fungizone was added to half of the cultures. However, no fungal contamination appeared in any of those cultures at that

time. Fungizone was also tested in bacterial medium and found ineffective in controlling fungal growth at the concentration that it could be used in the smooth muscle cell cultures. Culture medium removed from the cultures was plated on bacterial and fungal plates to check for contamination. At the start of the experiment, the culture medium that remained after cutting the blood vessel into small pieces for the explant was also placed on bacterial plates to test for contamination.

Once the cultures were contaminated, it did not prove feasible to remove the bacterial or fungal contamination since even if the culture medium was changed every $\frac{1}{2}$ hour for 6 hours, the contamination remained. The entire body surface of each swine was washed in disinfectant soap before operating to decrease contamination of the cultures. Also sterilized water, rather than unsterilized, was used in the incubator to moisturize the air.

In conclusion, of the two methods analyzed, the explant method was found more efficient than the enzyme method. Techniques to prevent bacterial and fungal contamination, and to provide a good surface for cell attachment have been investigated. It is hoped that the development of these techniques will ease the difficulty of growing smooth muscle cells in culture. Smooth muscle cells are a very important component of the disease

process of atherosclerosis. Their growth in culture provides an important advantage of studying the disease in an environment where variables can be controlled.

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LITERATURE CITED

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APPENDIX

Table II. Constituents of Dulbecco's Modified Eagle Medium.

| INORGANIC SALTS | mg/L |
|---|---------|
| CaCl ₂ (anhydrous) | 200.00 |
| Fe(NO ₃) ₃ · 9H ₂ O | 0.10 |
| KCl | 400.00 |
| MgSO ₄ · 7H ₂ O | 200.00 |
| NaCl | 6400.00 |
| NaHCO ₃ | 3700.00 |
| NaH ₂ PO ₄ · H ₂ O | 125.00 |
| OTHER COMPONENTS | |
| Glucose | 4500.00 |
| Phenol red | 15.00 |
| L-Arginine · HCl | 84.00 |
| L-Cystine | 48.00 |
| L-Glutamine | 584.00 |
| Glycine | 30.00 |
| L-Histidine HCl · H ₂ O | 42.00 |
| L-Isoleucine | 105.00 |
| L-Leucine | 105.00 |
| L-Lysine HCl | 146.00 |
| L-Methionine | 30.00 |
| L-Phenylalanine | 66.00 |
| L-Serine | 42.00 |
| L-Threonine | 95.00 |
| L-Tryptophane | 16.00 |
| L-Tyrosine | 72.00 |
| L-Valine | 94.00 |
| VITAMINS | |
| D - Ca pantothenate | 4.00 |
| Choline chloride | 4.00 |
| Folic acid | 4.00 |
| i - Inositol | 7.20 |
| Nicotinamide | 4.00 |
| Pyridoxal HCl | 4.00 |
| Riboflavin | 0.40 |
| Thiamine HCl | 4.00 |

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