

Nevogenesis

Mechanisms and Clinical Implications of Nevus Development

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Preface

The theories of how nevi develop including hypotheses regarding mechanisms of inception, growth, and ultimate senescence have received surprisingly little attention since Paul Gerson Unna originally proposed the “Abtropfung” theory of nevogenesis over 100 years ago. For almost a century this theory of nevogenesis was accepted as truth and remained uncontested. Over the past few decades some researchers, based on newly acquired observations from histopathology and embryogenesis, have questioned the validity of the “abtropfung” theory in favor of the “hochsteigerung” theory. In essence the “hochsteigerung” theory is the reverse of the “abtropfung” theory with the former stating that nevus cells migrate from the dermis to the epidermis and the latter stating that nevus cells migrate from the epidermis to the dermis. However, new insights gained from the epidemiology of nevi, cross-sectional and longitudinal study of nevi, dermoscopy and confocal microscopy investigation of nevi, as well as the cellular and molecular study of nevi bring into question the aforementioned theories. The focus of this book is to help elucidate what is currently known about nevogenesis, help stimulate thought in this field by bringing into question some of the established nevogenesis theories while at the same time providing possible alternative pathways explaining the life cycle of nevi, and encourage further research in the field of nevogenesis. Since nevi are associated with an increased risk of melanoma, understanding nevogenesis may help to unravel some of the mysteries of melanomagenesis.