Supplementary Comment on
"Histological Study of the Normal Vertebral Artery
—Etiology of Dissecting Aneurysms—"

The authors have studied the histology of the normal vertebral artery, measured vessel wall thickness and determined the presence of an internal elastic lamina (IEL) in 20 cadaveric specimens. By sectioning the specimens at 5 mm intervals, they were able to systematically evaluate specific sites of IEL defects. Such defects were observed at 35 sites in 11 vessels from six subjects 51 years of age or greater. No defects were identified in patients 35 years of age or younger. To further illustrate the relationship of IEL defects with advancing age, IEL defects at 14 sites were identified in the vertebral artery from a 92 year old patient.

Interestingly and perhaps of clinical importance was the observation of a high incidence of IEL defects in the immediate extradural portion of the vertebral artery and near the branching of the posterior inferior cerebellar artery. The author's graphs nicely illustrate the distribution of the IEL defects and suggest a potential mechanism for the development of spontaneous vertebral dissection at the sites of predilection.

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