



Letter to the Editor

Arthur Stanley Kent and accessory muscular atrioventricular connections



Sir,

Matsuyama and his colleagues provide an excellent three-dimensional reconstruction of an accessory muscular atrioventricular connection [1]. But do they really need to resurrect the old canard that such connections can appropriately be described as “Kent bundles”? They are correct that Kent, in 1893, reported that multiple myocardial bridges could be found crossing the plane of atrioventricular insulation [2]. Kent, however, was claiming that the myocardial connections were responsible for normal atrioventricular conduction. He continued to make this claim [3] even after His had correctly demonstrated that only a solitary myocardial connection was to be found in the normal heart [4]. At no point in his multiple claims, furthermore, did Kent provide histological evidence that the alleged connections crossed the plane of insulation. The illustrations provided by Kent did no more than reveal the structures that are now described as “atrioventricular ring tissue” [5]. The studies by Wessels and his colleagues showed that these entities were remnants of the primary ring of developing specialised conduction tissues [6]. It is now known that, on occasion, the atrial nodes can, indeed, be observed providing specialised accessory myocardial connections. These are now known as “atriofascicular tracts”, and produce the so-called “Mahaim” variant of ventricular pre-excitation [7]. It is also questionable whether, as Matsuyama and colleagues claim [1], “detailed histological exploration ... has not been reported”. As they subsequently recognise, “several significant histological reports were published in the 1970s and 1980s” [1]. It is also the case that Ohnell, in his thesis published in the 1940s [8], provided an accurate drawing showing the location of an accessory myocardial connections which was based on his “detailed histological exploration”.

Yours faithfully,

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