Celiac disease : from basic insight to therapy development

Stepniak, D.T.

Epilogue

Epilogue

The climate change at the end of the last ice age enabled a gradual transition from a hunter-gatherer mode of subsistence, which was practiced by all prehistoric human societies, to one based more upon the cultivation of crops for the purpose of food production. This transition process, referred to as the Neolithic Revolution, had profound consequences for the introduction of far-reaching social, cultural and technological innovations that directly resulted in the emergence of civilization. An increased reliance on cereal foods, nevertheless, unfortunately also showed detrimental effects: some genetically susceptible individuals started to develop intolerance to proteins present in grains. This intolerance is now known as celiac disease. Hence, the Neolithic Revolution, often regarded as one of the most significant developments in human history, contributed to the origin of this thesis in at least two distinct manners. Firstly, it is responsible for the fact I am civilized enough to be able to write it. And secondly, it ultimately led to the inception of celiac disease, an intriguing intestinal disorder, the study of which has been absorbing me for the past 4 years. This time would have not been so illuminating and enjoyable without the help and companionship of many individuals.

To begin with I would like to express my gratitude to Rudi Hendriks and Bart Roep for getting me in contact with my supervisor Frits Koning. This, of course next to the Neolithic Revolution, allowed me to join the research on celiac disease and determined my scientific development for the following 4 years.

The first moments in a new group are usually not easy. In this case, however, my landing in Koning group was cushioned by Yvonne Kooy-Winkelaar and Willemijn Vader, to whom I am indebted for the introduction to some of the experimental procedures used in the described PhD project. Furthermore, I would like to direct my words of appreciation to the rest of my close collaborators: Liesbeth Dekking, Cristina Mitea, Martina Wiesner, Renée Pablo-Baak, Allan Thompson, Jeroen van Bergen, Michael Kester, Jennifer Tjon, Tania Hoffman and Walter Zuijderduin for the reasons best known to themselves. This list would not be complete without Peter van Veelen and Arnoud de Ru whose expertise proved invaluable in the course of this research. Also the peptide section of the group contributed to the described results. Therefore my words of gratitude go to Jan Wouter Drijfhout, as well as Antoinette Texeira, Willemien Benckhuijsen and Peter de Koning. Similarly, I would like to acknowledge Kees Franken and Annemieke Friggen for their friendly assistance at multiple occasions, and the students who participated in my research: Astrid Voskamp, Martiene Moester and Jill de Jong.

The time spent at the IHB would definitely have been less pleasant and joyful without our lunch community. The group Ottenhoff as a whole deserves here the deepest admiration as its members constituted the die-hard core of this club and were always ready to prove that their priorities were well sorted out. Notwithstanding, some 'Ottenhoffjes' earn here my particular words of gratitude. First of all my 'paranimfen': May Young Lin and Jan Nouta. Their support and 'gezelligheid' are hard to overvalue. Also the help of Simone Joosten was and is highly appreciated.

A large part of my research relied on collaboration with other centers. The monthly CDC meetings in Utrecht were not only an incitement to frequent scientific brainstorms but also provided a great platform for social interactions. My special words of appreciation should be expressed to Cisca Wijmenga, Begoña Diosdado, Alienke Monsuur, Aleksandra Zhernakova, Lude Franke and Martin Wapenaar. On this occasion I would also like to thank George K. Papadopoulos and his group for our long-standing and fruitful collaboration.

Last but not least, I would like to take the opportunity to acknowledge all those exposed to my spoken Dutch over the past 4 years. Although in my case practice obviously did not make perfect, their kind indulgence encouraged me to learn and use this language.