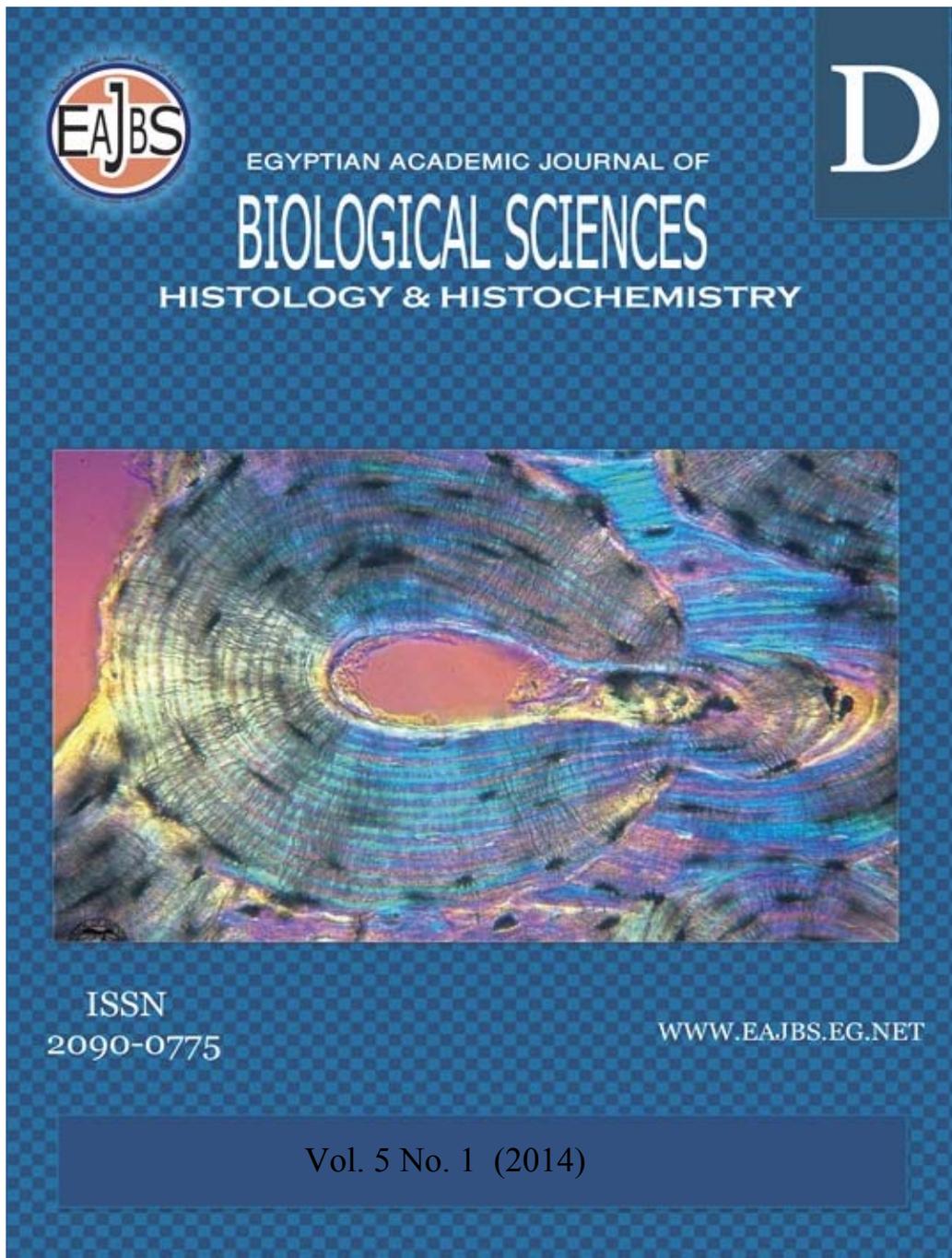


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Histological study of the prostate and vesicular glands of Eastern European hedgehog (*Erinaceous concolor*)

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ABSTRACT

In present study, prostate and seminal vesicle gland are investigated to determine their histological structure. Five prostates and seminal vesicles from adult hedgehogs, that had no clinical evidences, were evaluated. The description of the histological characteristics of glands was determined by light microscopy after removal and fixation of tissue samples, providing of 6-7 μ sections and staining with hematoxylin/eosin. Results showed that the prostate is surrounded by connective tissue capsule and trabeculae from the capsule dividing the gland into many compartments. Each compartment was lined with simple columnar epithelium. The seminal vesicle gland was observed to be divided by the connective tissue trabeculae. Epithelium of this gland was simple columnar with apical blebs.

INTRODUCTION

The male accessory sex glands of mammals include the prostate gland, the vesicular glands, the glands of the ampulla and the bulbourethral glands. These glands depend on androgen and play an important role in the reproductive function (Adebayo *et al.*, 2009; Aughey and Frye, 2001). Macroscopic and microscopic anatomy of these glands varies widely among different species of mammalian vertebrates (Thomson and Marker, 2006). Histology of prostate and vesicular glands have been studied in some mammals with almost different findings (Adebayo *et al.*, 2009).

Hedgehogs are minute mammals of Family Erinaceidae. These exotic pets are nocturnal and their bodies are coated with spiny-like needles. Recently they are receiving a great attention among pet owners. These animals have become increasingly popular as an exotic household pet due to being unique, cute, and low cost of maintenance pets (Youssefi *et al.*, 2013).

The aim of the present study is to histologically evaluate the prostate and vesicular gland in Eastern European hedgehog (*Erinaceous concolor*).

MATERIAL AND METHODS

This investigation was performed on 5 healthy adult male hedgehogs. Animals were captured from suburbs of Tabriz city of East Azerbaijan, Iran and euthanized by intra-peritoneal injection of sodium pentobarbital (250 mg/kg). The research protocol was approved by the ethical committee of the University of Tabriz. The prostate and vesicular glands were dissected out and tissue samples were fixed by immersion in 10% formalin. Then samples were dehydrated in graded ethanol, cleared in xylene, impregnated and embedded in paraffin wax. Sections of 6-7 μ thick were obtained with Leitz microtome model 1512 and stained with hematoxylin/eosin (H. & E.) (Bancroft and Stevens, 1977). All the slides were examined and photographed with an Olympus BH-2 light microscope to evaluate the histological features.

RESULTS

The findings showed that the wall of prostate gland was consisted of a connective tissue capsule. From the capsule, many trabeculae divided the gland into fluid filled lobes (Fig. 1). The mucosa (epithelium and lamina propria) was thrown into branching folds. The epithelium of the prostate was simple columnar supported by basement membrane (Figs. 2 and 3). Almost round nuclei and prominent central nucleoluses were observed in epithelium.

The vesicular gland was observed to be surrounded by connective tissue capsule with trabeculae originating from it (Fig. 4). The gland was lined with simple columnar cells of varying heights with oval nuclei (Fig. 5). These secretory epithelium had surface blebs (large flaccid vesicles) giving a ragged appearance to the cells (Fig. 6).

DISCUSSION

Accessory sex glands are important in reproductive functions of mammals. Some researches have showed that secretions of accessory sex glands influence sperm physiology and fertilization. From another prospective, secretions of the accessory sex glands are able to enhance the fertilizing capacity of some domestic animals sperm (Henault *et al.*, 1995; Moura *et al.*, 2007). So, the histological and physiological study of these glands can help in understanding of reproductive biology of mammals.

It has been revealed that in the stallion and dog, the epithelium of the prostate gland is consisted of tall columnar secretory cells that are similar to findings of the present study.

Adebayo *et al.* (2009) have reported that in greater cane rat (*Thryonomys swinderianus* Temminck) the prostate is surrounded by connective tissue capsule and compartments are lined with simple columnar cells containing nuclei with eccentrically located nucleoluses. In Caspian miniature horse, the secretory epithelium of prostate is cuboidal to columnar and/or pseudostratified (Sodagar Amiri *et al.*, 2010).

Vesicular glands of Eastern European hedgehog is almost similar to other mammals is having simple columnar epithelium (Adebayo *et al.*, 2009). In carnivores, these glands are absent but are true vesicles in the stallion. In bull, the secretory epithelium of vesicular glands is tall columnar with apical blebs that is similar with the results of the present study (Aughey and Frye, 2001).



Fig. 1: Section of the prostate gland. Note the compartment (star) and connective tissue trabecule (C). ($\times 40$, H. & E.)



Fig. 2: Fluid filled compartment (S) and epithelium (arrow) of the prostate gland. ($\times 40$, H. & E.).

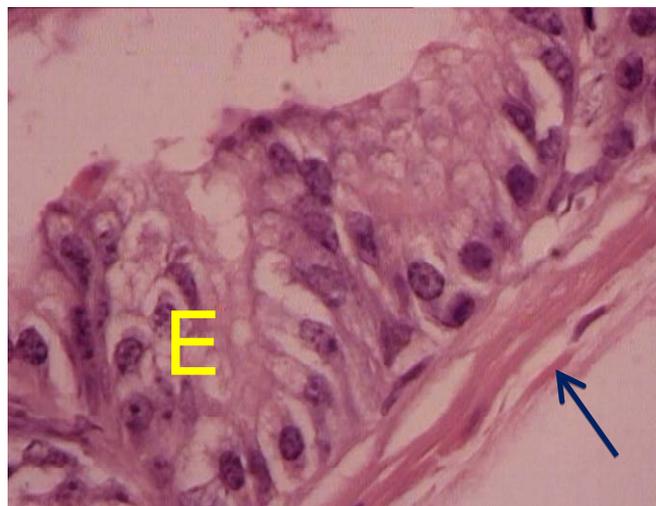


Fig. 3: Simple columnar epithelium (E) and connective tissue between compartments (arrow) of the prostate gland. ($\times 400$, H. & E.).



Fig. 4: The vesicular gland. Secretory compartment (star) and connective tissue (arrow), ($\times 40$, H. & E).

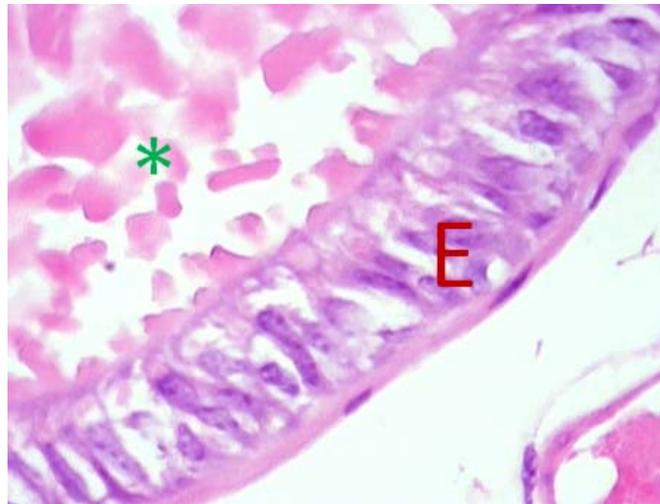


Fig. 5: Epithelium of the vesicular gland (E) and accumulated fluid in compartment (Star). ($\times 400$, H. & E).

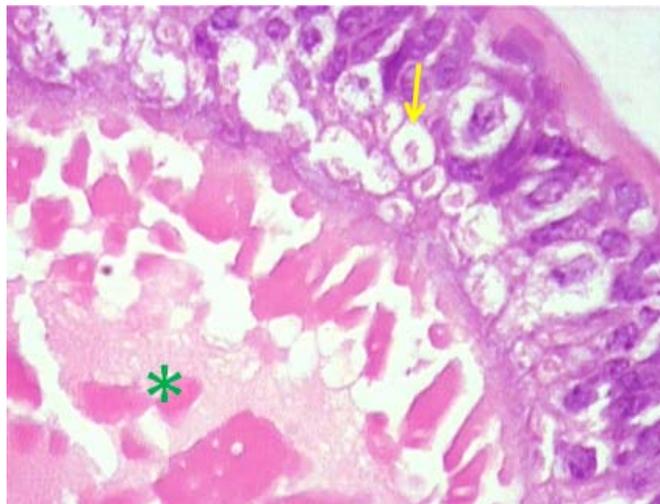


Fig. 6: Simple columnar epithelium of the vesicular gland with surface blebs (arrow) and fluid in compartment (star). ($\times 400$, H. & E)

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