Microscopy Microanalysis

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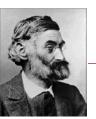
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Dear Abbe

Dear Abbe,

I am having trouble with my light microscopes. I keep seeing double even when I correctly adjust the interpupillary distance and dioptric parameters. Is it me, or could something serious be wrong with the scope?

Cross-eyed in Chicago

Dear Cross,

There is probably something wrong with the scope, and there is a high probability that there is something wrong with you. The only time I have seen double in the microscope is after a morning of too much Rüdesheimer Kaffee with an old friend, Hans Karl Adam. We stopped by the lab for coffee, but all we could find was an old bag of foul-smelling coffee, which we had to brew in over-chlorinated tap water. Fortunately we had some cheap brandy laying around (used as alternative fuel for a rusty microscope lamp). The label had worn off, and the cork had to be removed with a pair of vise grips, so I'm guessing it was cheap brandy. After two flambéed cups later, my interpupillary distance was widened and my dioptric parameters were obliterated. I think Herr Adam switched to Asbach Uralt later to perfect the drink.

Dear Abbe,

We have a dual-head microscope for two people viewing histology slides simultaneously. I just recently moved to the lab, and I've noticed couples spending more and more time at this scope—more than samples would warrant. I am worried that there is some other purpose than just shared viewing of the slides. Have you ever noticed this phenomenon?

Melanie in Montreal

Dear Melanie.

Yes, indeed, I have some knowledge of this occurrence and should warn you about certain mating systems in Microscopy Cultures in labs around the world. This uncommon but growing culture has been studied extensively by my good friend and social anthropologist, Franz Boas. He dabbled in the mating rituals of laboratory workers and uncovered a strong and unusual mating system among microscopists. He noted that, in some histology labs, as couples spent time looking at slides together, they formed strong bonds (not unlike pretzels and beer). It became common to have a "date," and the male of the species providing H&E-stained sections for the occasion. As they progress, the samples become more intimate and suggestive, leading to histochemistry and even immunocytochemistry in the more advanced stages. In the past, this could end in microscopy haikus (don't ask) and ocular tête-à-têtes, but now with our digital culture there is the unfortunate chance these dual-head microscope sessions could lead to microxting (why do you think there's a keyboard attached to your digital microscope?). I wouldn't really worry unless they move from the dual-head microscope to a confocal with a large LCD display for group viewing.

Having trouble seeing your way through a sticky situation? Feel free to sling your troubles at Herr Abbe! You can contact him through his minimally capable assistant at jpshield@uga.edu.

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