

Evidence of an Immune Response to allograft grafted valve leaflets

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Traditionally, heart valve grafts have been considered to be "immunologically privileged" or not subject to any immune response from the recipient. In recent years doubt has begun to be cast on the validity of this hypothesis, but few, if any, direct demonstrations of cellular immune response have been documented.

We have now retrieved two of our aortic valve grafts after only 2 months of implantation and observed in these a marked cellular response to the leaflets. Immunohistochemical staining has indicated that the cells involved are predominantly T-lymphocytes.