

The adjective “cutaneous” hereby refers to the skin and external mucosae, to its adnexa, and to the subcutaneous panniculus. Cutaneous lesions are those that involve the mentioned elements, although they may also comprise cartilage, salivary glands, synovial remnants, and even other elements which may appear incidentally on the external surface of the body. The classification of these lesions would be highly desirable in order to approach the study of dermatopathology in a rational way. However, given the frequently poorly defined histopathologic character of the cutaneous lesion, their often mixed and overlapping features, and, furthermore, the continuous change of the lesions throughout their evolution, that classification may turn out to be a difficult task.

The challenges encountered in attempting to classify cutaneous lesions can only be met by using ample and yielding guidelines and parameters, a tolerant attitude upon their application, and a readiness to modify or change these when the results of their application do not satisfy the expectations of the author. In fact, the objective of such classification should not be to obtain a rigid and immutable taxonomic structure but rather to provide a dynamic tool which facilitates the introduction to and further study of dermatopathology to the interested person.

After this cautionary note, it may be stated that skin lesions, either solitary or multiple, associated to any concomitant process or not, may be considered either the expression of hereditary problems or instead, of sheer malformative, inflammatory, or proliferative conditions. These lesions may therefore be placed in any of the four Divisions of hereditary, malformative, inflammatory, or proliferative nature. If the features of a lesion do not justify its inclusion into any of these four Divisions, it may be placed into a fifth Division of lesions of miscellaneous nature (Table 2.1). This is a more rational approach than skipping or ignoring that “problem lesion” or forcing it into a position where it does not belong and where it may constitute a continuous irritant prone to alter the logic of the entire taxonomic system.

The lesions comprised in the five postulated Divisions are discussed in Chapters 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7, in the second part of this work. A leading distinctive color assigned to each division (see Table 2.1) is displayed on the running titles, and the background of legends of tables and figures of the corresponding chapter highlights the nature of the lesions dealt with in each of the chapters.

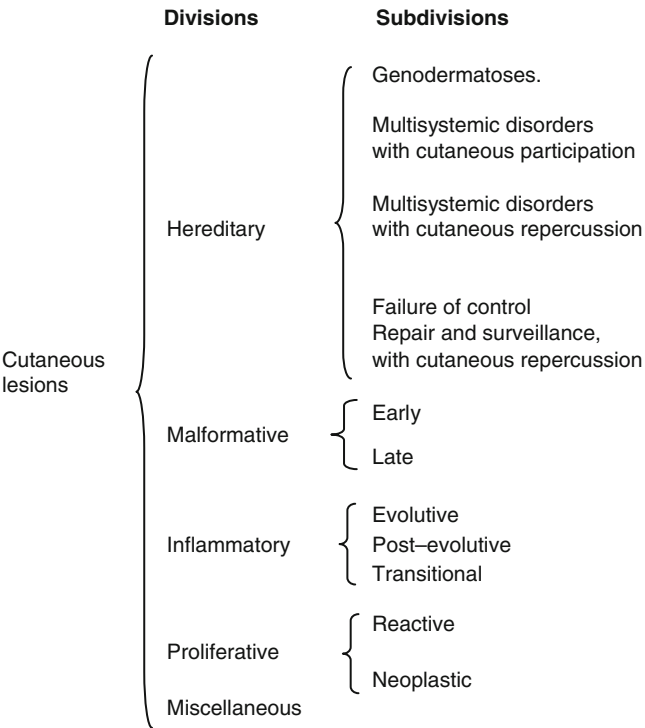
The lesions in each Division are progressively segregated into Subdivisions, Classes, Subclasses, Groups, and Subgroups until finally reaching sets of lesions with resemblances to the ones in the same set but varying significantly from those in other sets. The variable, pragmatic character of the criteria applied for the initial separation of the lesions in the five divisions may be appreciated in Fig. 2.1.

In the Division of hereditary lesions, the separation is based on clinical criteria which allow the identification of four Subdivisions of this type of lesions. In the second Division, an evaluative criterion is applied which permits the separation of the lesions into two Subdivisions, as occurring in the early and late ontogenesis. Regarding the lesions in the third and fourth Divisions, microscopic criteria are preferred. These lead to the identification of three Subdivisions of inflammatory lesions, that is, evolutive, postevolutive, and transitional, and two Subdivisions of proliferative lesions, that is, reactive and neoplastic, respectively. The highly dissimilar character of the lesions enclosed in the fifth division prevents their systematic separation as in the previous subdivisions, and only classes of lesions are presented, based on their most prominent features.

The process of segregation of the lesions is graphically explained in the particular case of the Division of inflammatory

**Table 2.1** Divisions of the cutaneous lesions according to their primary nature – distinctive color for each division

Division	Distinctive color
Hereditary	Orange
Malformative	Blue
Inflammatory	Red
Proliferative	Gray
Miscellaneous	Green

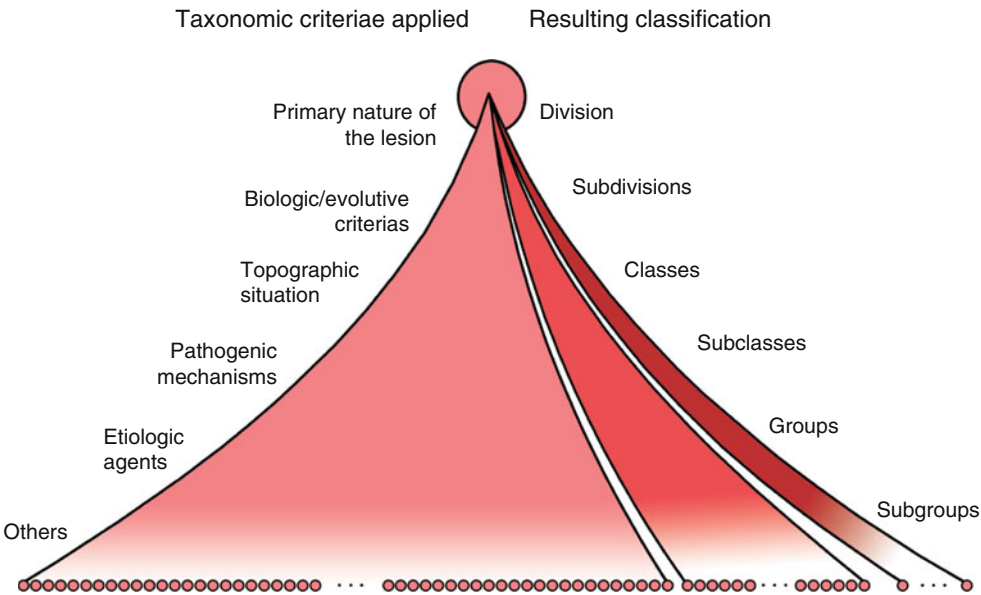


**Fig. 2.1** Criteria applied for the initial separation of the cutaneous lesions in the five divisions

lesions – which is the most numerous and complicated of the ones of cutaneous lesions (Fig. 2.2). After the initial characterization of the lesions contained in the top central circle of the figure as “inflammatory” – by the red color used for that purpose – the lesions fan out into three beams: the broadest one in bright red, the next in dull red, and the narrowest one in port-wine red. They represent the *evolutionary*, the *postevolutionary*, and the *transitional* inflammatory lesions respectively (Fig. 2.2).

Upon applying the chosen taxonomic criteria stated to the left of the figure to the three mentioned, Subdivisions, Classes, Subclasses, Groups, and Subgroups of lesions are progressively generated, as indicated on the right side of the figure. The dots at the base of the figure represent sets of evolutionary, postevolutionary, and transitional lesions resulting from the working out of the division. Although the number under which the sets are purported is arbitrary, they somehow reflect the proportion in which the three types of lesions are found in practice: the evolutionary are the most numerous, whereas the transitional are the scantest.

The nomenclature applied in this work uses mostly precise histopathologic terms combined whenever possible to current and traditional names used in clinical dermatology. The employed vocabulary attempts to avoid confusing terms or those with an excessively clinical accent.



**Fig. 2.2** Graphic representation of the taxonomic workout of the lesions of inflammatory nature

Dermatopathology

Classification of Cutaneous Lesions

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