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Palatal Rugae: An Overview of Morphology, Development and Forensic Significance

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Abstract
The palatal rugae or the rugae palatinae are anatomical formations seen inside the oral cavity, being an intrinsic feature of the hard palate region. The paper at hand investigates the anatomy, ontogeny and usability of palatal rugae for the forensic application. Given their specificity and variation between individuals, palatal rugae can be quite an effective means of individualization. This research investigates the future applications in forensic science and indicates the need for further research in this field.
Key words*: Palatal rugae, forensic science, classification of rugae, forensic significance and applications of rugae, etc.*

1. Introduction
In front of the hard palate, there are a few transverse folds of mucous membrane that are asymmetrical and uneven; these are called palatal rugae. They are quite unique and possess traits that could be utilised for forensic identification, akin to fingerprints and dental data.

Figure 1 Palatal Rugae of a Real Human

To employ palatal rugae in forensics, one must be knowledgeable of their morphology and evolution. Figure 1 Shows Palatal Rugae of a Real Human

2. Morphology of Palatal Rugae
The morphological characteristics or features of palatal rugae are related to the physical anatomy that describes these anatomical structures existing on the anterior portion of the hard palate in the oral cavity. Palatal rugae are described by its unique and individualistic shape, which can vary with Individuals. The morphology of palatal rugae includes the following:

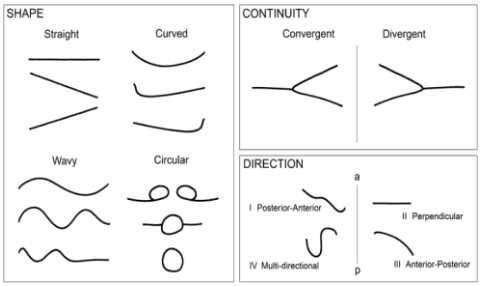

Figure 2 Patterns Found in a Palatal Rugae

- **Shape:** Palatal rugae can be of different forms, including straight, wavy, circular, and curved. The shapes also differ from one individual to another. [1-10]
- **Length**: The length of palatal rugae differs from person to person. Some will have longer rugae compared to others, while others will have shorter rugae. Figure 2 shows Patterns Found in a Palatal Rugae
- **Number**: Even the number of palatal rugae is not the same for everybody. A person can have an altered number of major rugae and

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secondary or even tertiary rugae, which are smaller.

- **Distribution**: The distribution of the palatal rugae may also vary. The rugae of some persons can be close together, whereas the rugae of others are more spaced.
- **Symmetry**: As in any other structure, generally the palatal rugae do not follow symmetry either left or right sides of palate.
- **Irregularity**: Palatal rugae very frequently demonstrate irregular patterns.

Figure 3 Extracting the Impression of the Palatal Rugae Using Plaster of Paris

Because they are unique to each person and largely stable over the course of a lifetime, the combination of these morphological traits makes palatal rugae an invaluable tool for forensic identification. Palatal rugae may be used in forensic science and personal identification because of their individuality. Figure 3 Shows Extracting the Impression of the Palatal Rugae Using Plaster of Paris[11-12]

Based on their direction and position, palatal rugae can be broadly divided into three types: [3]

- **Primary Rugae**: Found near the incisive papilla, these are the first to form.
- **Secondary Rugae:** These are typically more numerous and developed after the original rugae and generally more in number.
- **Tertiary Rugae**: These are the smallest size and can sometimes appear between the primary and secondary rugae.

3. Morphological Characteristics

Morphological Features Palatal rugae differ greatly in length, form, number and organisation. They could be curved and irregular or straight and parallel. Straight, circular and wavy designs are typical. Each person has a different number of palatal rugae, although the most frequent are three to seven primary rugae and several secondary and tertiary rugae.

4. Development of Palatal Rugae

Palatal rugae formation begins during the embryonic stage and continues throughout childhood. Genetics, intrauterine pressure, and foetal head posture are all factors that influence their development. By the age of nine, the palatal rugae are fully developed and experience only minor changes.

5. Forensic Significance

Palatal rugae have forensic importance since they can be a valuable aid in personal identification and for other applications in forensic science.

6. Uniqueness and Consistency

Palatal rugae are quite unique, and their rarity makes them a highly valuable tool for forensic identification. Palatal rugae, unlike any other biometric trait such as fingerprints, remain largely stable throughout the lifetime of an individual.

7. Forensic Applications

Palatal rugae can be used for a number of forensic purposes, including:

- Human identification: Palatal rugae can be utilised to confirm the identify of deceased people in the event of a mass catastrophe or criminal inquiry.
- Age estimation: In circumstances where a child is absent, the palatal rugae's developmental stage may be useful in determining the child's age.
- Analysis of bite marks: Suspects can be identified by comparing the patterns of palatal rugae with the bite marks on the victims.
- Living individual identification: Another biometric trait for identifying a person is their palatal rugae. [13-17]

Conclusion

Palatal rugae represent a new, challenging way of forensic identification. Its specificity and stability plus their early formation and a very simple examination make this item valuable for the forensic practice tool. Further study of this issue is needed

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with an aim to standardizing analysis procedures of palatal rugae, which would increase their usage in the science of forensic.

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