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Scanning electron microscopy of bacteria in the apical part of root canals in permanent teeth with periapical lesions.

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The most apical 2 mm of the root canals of periapically diseased roots were examined for microorganisms by scanning electron microscopy (SEM). Bacteria in this area were observed in 10 out of 12 (83.3%) cases. The two remaining cases exhibited bacteria more coronally, with tissue remnants between the bacterial front and the apical foramen. Rod-shaped bacteria dominated, but filaments, spirochetes and cocci were also seen. Cocci and rods sometimes formed micro-colonies. Occasionally, cocci were seen attached to filaments forming "corn-cob"-like structures. Deposits resembling bacterial plaque were also found inside the root canal. SEM is useful for studying microbial topography of the apical root canal.

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