

Helmut Popper

# Pathology of Lung Disease

Morphology  
– Pathogenesis  
– Etiology

 Springer

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Morphology – Pathogenesis  
– Etiology

With contribution by Prof. Fiorella Calabrese

 Springer

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## Preface

Scio, me nihil scire (a phrase attributed to the Greek philosopher Socrates)

As an academic pathologist, I see this phrase not as discouraging but instead encouraging. In almost every disease, there are many unanswered questions, so when our students ask about it, we have to answer that we do not know. But many of the “I do not know answers” can be the starting point for a new research proposal – in this sense I mean our missing knowledge “is not discouraging” at all.

Pathology has reached an important crossroad: there is danger of losing competence on one hand but also a bright revival of the importance of pathology. Many new discoveries have shed light into pathogenesis, which we had previously simply described from our understanding of morphology, but which now we can interpret with a completely different perspective of understanding underlying molecular processes.

In tumors, we have learned a lot about the importance of genetic abnormalities and what the results from these alterations are. We are just learning to separate driver mutations and alterations of genes from cooperating mutations and use some of these genetic abnormalities to treat our patients in a completely new way with fewer side effects.

In inflammatory and immune diseases, we have learned that lymphocytes can act in an opposite way, either bringing good or bad actions in a given disease. Lymphocytes can aggravate the damage of lesions initiated by infectious organisms or help to defend against the organisms. Developments in immunology research have broadened our understanding of regulations between the many types of regulatory lymphocytes and antigen-presenting cells. This will not only enable us to more precisely diagnose immune diseases but also to promote immune attack toward tumor cells in patients. In addition, immunooncology has entered tumor therapy, and pathologists are faced with new challenges in the interpretation of anti- or pro-tumor action of the patient’s immune system.

Has this changed our recognition? If you do an Internet research looking for basic science investigations, pathologists are hardly in the forefront of this type of research; they are rarely leading. Most often, if ever they are coauthors, because they have contributed some tissues for the investigation, or sometimes have made the diagnosis, so the research material could be grouped.

And many pathologists are just happy to contribute on this small scale. Some are even happy to outsource molecular pathologic diagnostics to private companies instead of doing this investigation “in-house.” Other pathologists have developed a pseudoscientific habit: By changing classifications every 4–5 years, they assume they will be regarded as important. But this old style of changing little diagnostic boxes and giving them new names, without creating new information, will not last for more than a few years. Will this increase our reputation? I think not. This behavior will finally degrade pathology departments into a tissue repository, and pathologists into biobank curators, who do not care what this tissue is used for.

Is there an alternative? Where is the bright light and future?

We need to learn the biology of the diseases, and we need to familiarize with their genetic abnormalities and what impact genetic changes might have. In our daily practice, we often see a time sequence of pathogenetic events in a given disease. We need to assemble these single-time events like pictures into a movie (early–intermediate–late, resolving–recurrent). For example, early on, hyperplasia might be the first step into neoplasia. The cells acquire better access to nutrition and oxygen supply, which enables them to grow faster and outrange their normal neighbors. Some of these cells develop atypia; among them are tissue stem cells, which can move out, settle down at another focus, and establish another hyperplastic focus. Some of these colonies will develop into preneoplastic lesions, others will be whipped out by the immune system, and others will die due to defective DNA repair and apoptosis. All these events will leave footprints in the tissue, and we as pathologists should read and interpret these footprints and correlate this with the underlying genetic changes: phenotypic genotypic correlation is a key to better understanding and better diagnostics. The same is true for immune diseases. Understanding the interaction of immune cells in an autoimmune disease and analyzing the cells present at a given time sequence might not only provide a more accurate diagnosis but also might provide understanding of the disease progression and finally pave ways for better treatment. So a successful new type of pathologist will understand the biology behind a given morphology and in this way will be a welcomed partner in research as well as in the patient management team.

It will be impossible to describe all aspects of etiology and pathogenesis in all diseases we will cover; this would go beyond the scope of this book on lung diseases. However, I will summarize as good as possible pathogenesis and etiology in each of the entities, being aware that I am not able to give a complete overview.

This book is based on my experience of dealing with lung diseases for more than 35 years. I present a one-author book instead of the common multi-author books, because all the chapters will be in line with my perspective of interpreting pathology. And this can be summarized as follows: pattern recognition is a first step of analysis, but looking into the pathogenesis and etiology of a disease is what makes a good pathologist. One chapter is an exception: My practice in transplant pathology is limited. In Austria, lung transplantation is concentrated in Vienna, which results to less tissues being studied. So I was happy that Fiorella was willing to contribute this chapter.

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I encourage you as the reader and user of this book to communicate with me on your critiques, as this is important for future improvements. I have learned more from mistakes than from everything else. Misdiagnosis was my best teacher. As in every scientific discipline, mistakes and misinterpretations do occur, sometimes simply overlooked.

Graz, Austria

Helmut Popper

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I am indebted to my family especially to my wife Ursula for her understanding during my increasing commitment with lung pathology.

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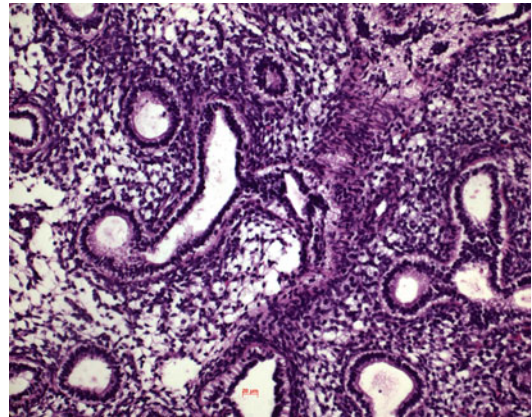
The lung develops from the foregut. At the highness of the later larynx, the single tube splits into two buds for the esophagus and the lower respiratory tract, the “Lungenanlage” [1] (around gestational week 4). Out of this primitive bud, the larynx and the trachea develop, and the trachea finally separates into two bronchial buds. As in general, organogenesis recapitulates also the developmental stages of mammalian lung: a bronchial bud is also formed for a possible mediastinal lobe, as it is found in sheep, swine, and other mammals. If this bud persists, a median mediastinal bronchial cyst can result [2]. Supernumerary buds are usually deleted by apoptotic mechanisms [3, 4]. Sometimes these buds can give rise to communications with the esophagus [5] or also to bronchogenic cysts [2, 6].

The bronchial buds give rise to several generations of bronchi, starting with the main bronchi, lobar bronchi, segmental bronchi, and so on. In the human lung, approximately 16 generations are formed around the seventh week. After that, bronchioli are formed with an additional of four generations, as membranous, and three generations of terminal respiratory bronchioli. These open into alveolar ducts on which alveoli are grouped.

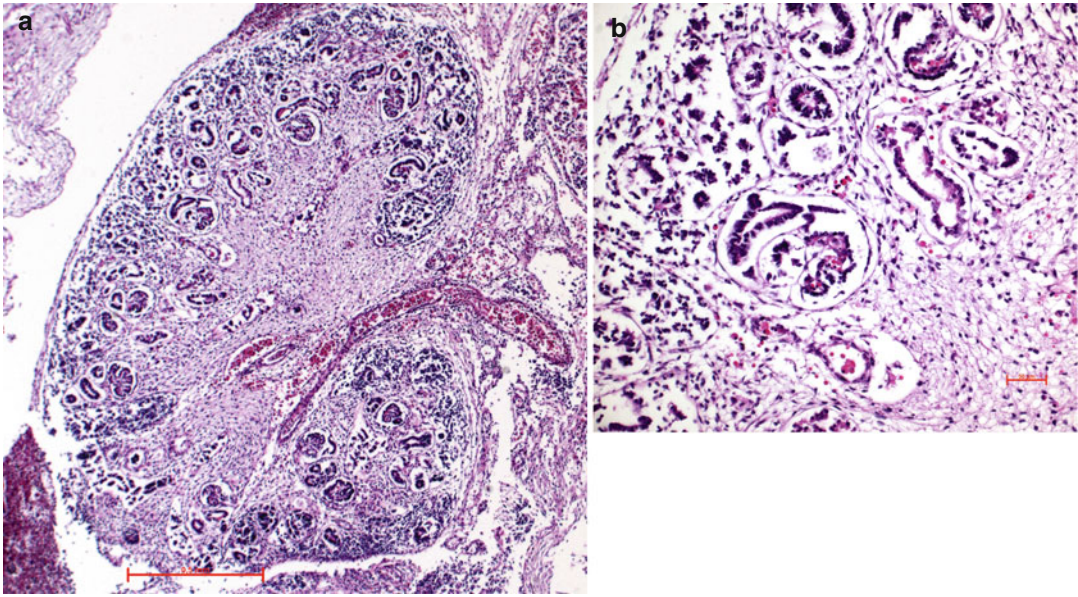
For the bronchial and alveolar development, the mesenchyme derived from the mesoderm is essential. Each primitive bronchus is surrounded by splanchnopleuromesoderm. Without the connection to the mesoderm, no alveoli develop [7]. Some mediators have been identified, which are responsible for this cooperation between bronchial sprouting

and mesenchyme development, such as epimorphin and fibroblast growth factor 7 (FGF7). If this is knocked out, no sprouting does occur [8, 9].

The different developmental stages of the lung are the embryonic stage, where the lung consists of branching tubules (gestational weeks 4–8). These tubules are lined by a single row of high columnar epithelium. In the pseudoglandular phase (weeks 8–16), the branching bronchial tree is embedded in a primitive immature mesenchyme; however, there are so many tubules that it mimics glandular structures (Figs. 1.1 and 1.2).

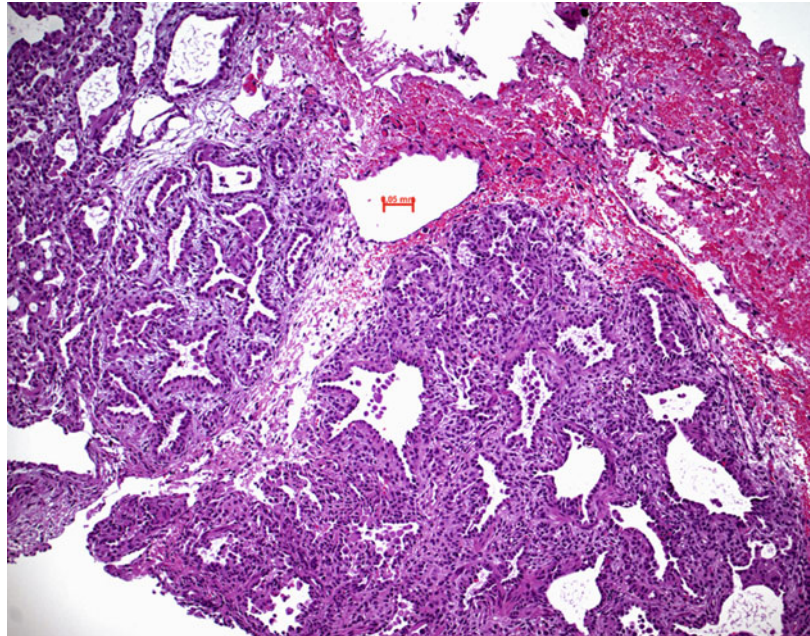


**Fig. 1.1** Lung specimen in the early developmental tubular stage, eight week of gestation; the bronchial buds are separated by a primitive mesenchyme, only few primitive endothelial precursor cells can be identified, and capillaries have not been formed. A pulmonary artery has been cut tangentially and is seen between two bronchial buds (right upper border to middle lower border). H&E, bar 20 μm



**Fig. 1.2** (a, b) Lung specimen in early developmental glandular stage, 12th gestation week; (a) bronchial buds are seen embedded in a primitive mesenchymal stroma, (b) but early glands are already formed. H&E, bar 500 and 50  $\mu\text{m}$

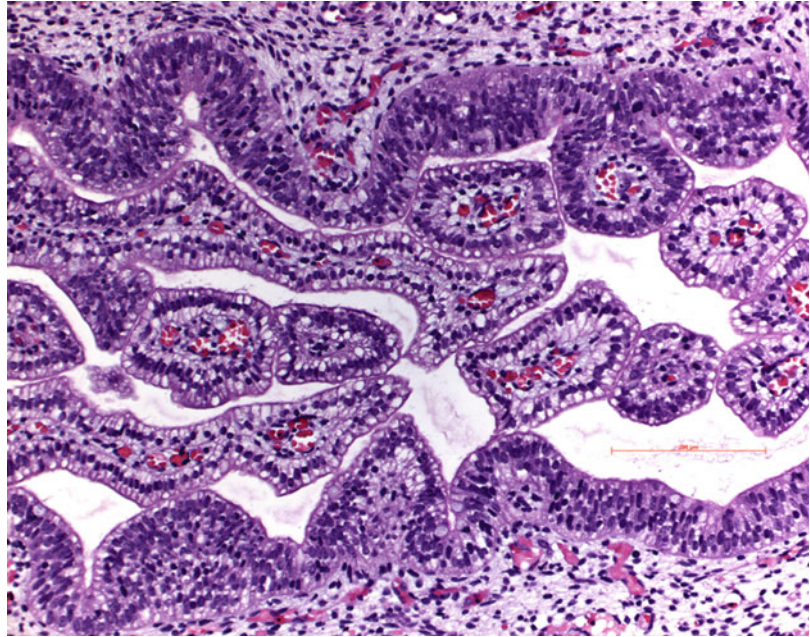
**Fig. 1.3** Lung specimen in a premature child (gestation week 24); in transition from canicular to saccular stage with primitive alveoli, which have not branched, the epithelium already shows pneumocytes in type II, and capillaries are already present; in this case the child developed bronchopulmonary dysplasia. H&E, bar 50  $\mu\text{m}$



Around the 13th week, the canicular stage begins lasting until the 25th week. In this stage, the last generations of bronchioli are formed, the epithelium starts to differentiate into pneumocytes type I and II, capillaries are formed around the alveoli, and the bronchi are folded to form the

first primitive lobules (Fig. 1.3). The bronchial epithelium also starts from few layers of cells, which expand during development and maturation. Columnar epithelia on H&E-stained section appear as clear cells due to abundant glycogen storage in the cytoplasm, and the nuclei

**Fig. 1.4** Lung specimen at the development age of 18th gestation week; the bronchial epithelium shows nicely the clear cell pattern with apical positioned nuclei; this changes during maturation: nuclei start to move from the apical to the final basal location within the cell. The clear cell pattern results from abundant glycogen storage, which is dissolved during tissue section processing (alcohol). H&E, bar 200  $\mu$ m



are positioned at the apical cell portion (Fig. 1.4). During maturation, nuclei move toward the basal portion of the cell, and other structures and proteins replace glycogen granules. In the saccular or terminal sac stage (gestational weeks 24–36), the alveoli are formed, expanded, and capillarized, and surfactant synthesis is started. During the last 2 weeks (alveolar phase), alveoli are expanded, filled by amniotic fluid, secondary septation starts (proceeding still after birth), and respiration starts. In this phase, the fetus already can take up oxygen from the amniotic fluid and release carbon dioxide. Even after birth bronchial generations and alveoli can be generated [9]. The newborn human has approximately 50 million alveoli at birth, which represents approximately one-sixth of the number of an adult.

The vascular structures arise in two different ways: the large arteries start from the sixth branchial arch and grow along the bronchial tree down to the periphery behind the ductus arteriosus. The veins develop later by sprouting from the left atrium into the mediastinum but in addition also from the sinus venosus. The veins reach the developing primitive lobules and surround them at the surface. Veins primarily form sinusoi-

dal islands and coalesce into conducting structures following the interlobular septa [8, 9]. In contrast the capillaries develop from the mesoderm [10, 11].

Bronchial arteries can be found from the ninth week of gestation. They form a plexus around the bronchi and form anastomoses with the pulmonary veins, whereas a specialized form of blood vessels, the contractile arteries, organizes the connection with the pulmonary arteries. During the saccular stage of the development, the central and peripheral vascular structures are joined. If this program is disturbed, pulmonary sequestration can result, where a part of the peripheral vascular bed is joined to a systemic artery. Also other vascular malformations such as Scimitar syndrome can be based on program failure in this period.

Lymphatic vessels are formed as a plexus in the hilar region together with the ductus thoracicus and are developed at the fifth fetal month.

Nerves are primarily formed out of ganglia of nervus vagus and truncus sympathicus/parasympathicus. An outer and inner plexus is formed around the bronchi, which is finally fused into one plexus at the site of the bronchioles. At the eighth month, nerves and ganglia are mature;

neurofilaments can be demonstrated. The nerves can be separated into secretory and sensory as well as motoric fibers. They are close to the bronchial muscles and also around blood vessels.

Neuroendocrine cells (NEC) can be found from the eight gestational weeks on, whereas in bronchioles and alveoli, they can be first demonstrated by neuroendocrine markers around the fifth month (chromogranin A, synaptophysin, PGP9.5). NECs are essential for the proper development and maturation of the bronchial tree.

The other mesenchymal structures, such as myoblasts and chondroblasts, develop from the coelom (splanchnopleura), which surrounds the developing bronchial tree.

The pleura also starts from the coelom (splanchnopleura), which surrounds the “Lungenanlage” [8, 9]. From there the visceral pleura develop. From the pericardo-peritoneal channel, which is the lateral portion of the splanchnopleura, the parietal pleura arises. Primarily the parietal pleura fills both lateral thoracic cavities, since the developing bronchi occupy only small portions of the cavity. The recessus pleura pulmonalis is the only portion, which is free of lung structures.

## 1.1 Genetic Control of the Development

The organogenesis and maturation of the lung are under the control of genes, which are still only marginally explored. Thyroid transcription factor 1 (TTF1), hepatocyte nuclear factor (HNF3 $\beta$ ), retinoic acid receptor (RAR), Kruppel-like factor 5 (KLF5), and GATA6 all have been identified as differentiation factors for the developing lung [7, 12, 13]. HOX genes and sonic hedgehog (Shh-Gli) are responsible for organogenesis [14]. More specifically FGF2, FGF7, and FGF10 engineer bronchial sprouting [7, 15]. From mouse studies, many more factors are known: The genes listed above act more general, but in the developing bronchial bud, more fine-tuning is required, which is regulated by the interaction of the epithelium and the surrounding mesenchyme. Also NEC play a role: by secreting adrenocorticotropin, in the embryonic and fetal period – rather a

growth hormone than an endocrine protein – local growth stimuli are directed toward the dividing bronchial bud, whereas apoptotic mechanisms counteract and abolish supernumerary buds [16–18].

## 1.2 Comparison of Lung Development Across Species

Within the mammalian family, wide variations are known. In marsupials the young are born with a lung in the pseudoglandular phase; the whole lung development starts after birth. In mice, rats, and hamsters, the young are delivered with lungs in the canalicular phase, and alveoli are formed after birth. In guinea pigs and also in carnivores and sheep, the young have a fully developed lung before birth. Human beings are in between these groups: The alveolar/terminal sacular phase already starts before birth but continues after birth until the fourth to fifth year of postnatal life. After that, the lung still grows in size but the numerical structure is reached [8, 9].

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In this chapter, we will focus on all aspects of the anatomy and histology of the lung as far as necessary to understand lung function in disease. This chapter does not aim to replace textbooks on anatomy, histology, and lung physiology. More detailed information can be found in these books.

## 2.1 Gross Morphology

In humans two lungs are formed. In some mammals, an additional mediastinal lobe is generated, which has its own bronchus directly branching off from the trachea. Both lungs fill the thoracic cavities leaving the midportion for the mediastinal structures and the heart and the posterior midportion for the esophagus and other structures of the posterior mediastinum. The lungs are covered by the visceral pleura, whereas the thoracic wall is internally covered by the parietal pleura. Both merge at the hilum of each lung. The right lung consists of three lobes, the left of two lobes, upper, middle, and lower lobes (Fig. 2.1). The normal lung of an adult weighs 350 (right) to 250 g (left); the lung volume varies individually between 3.5 and 8 L.

Each lobe is further divided into segments (Fig. 2.2). Each upper lobe has three segments, apical, posterior, and anterior, usually numbered accordingly from 1 to 3. In the right lung, the middle lobe is divided into a lateral (4) and a medial (5) segments. On the left side, two further

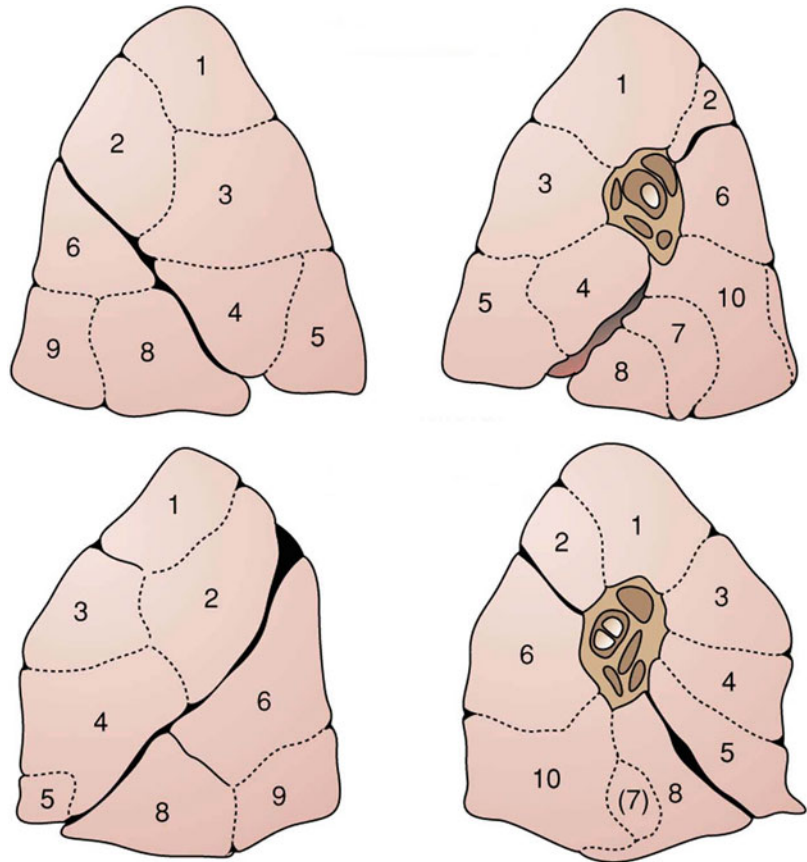
bronchi are found supporting the lingula with a superior (4) and inferior (5) segment. Both lower lobes are divided into a superior (6), mediobasal (7), anterobasal (8), laterobasal (9), and posterobasal (10) segment. The segments are composed of subsegments, which can, however, anatomically not be separated.



**Fig. 2.1** Paper mount section of the right lung; the fissure between the upper and lower lobe is seen; the central hilar structures are represented by pulmonary arteries and bronchi

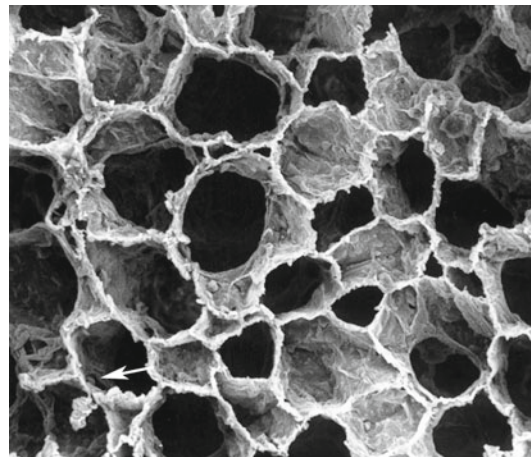


**Fig. 2.2** Schematic representation of lung segments, *right upper panel, left lower panel*



An alveolar duct together with his alveoli forms the primary lobule. This lobule is difficult to identify on histology (easier in children's lung) and impossible on CT scan. A terminal bronchiole III splits into several alveolar ducts, is larger, and can be identified on CT scan. Histologically this secondary lobule can also be identified by its interlobular septa. Between alveoli pores do exist (pores of Kohn), which permit gas exchange between primary lobules (Fig. 2.3). Between lobules another connecting structure, the channels of Lambert, permits gas exchange.

Fissures are separating the lobes on each site. These are formed by visceral pleura. The fissures between the lower and the middle/lingula and upper lobe are usually well developed and can be followed almost to the hilum. The fissure between the upper and middle lobe clearly separates the



**Fig. 2.3** Scanning electron micrograph showing alveolar tissue. The epithelial layer is characterized by *grayish color*, whereas the stroma is more dense and therefore *white*. An *arrow* points to a pore of Kohn