7. The basal lamella

The basal lamella is the third critical anatomical landmark for the endoscopist and the third grand lamella for the anatomist. The horizontal portion may be visualized within the middle meatus below and posterior to the ethmoidal bulla. The vertical portion is sometimes visualized by simple endoscopy at the posterior limit of the hiatus semilunaris posterior. Most of the basal lamella is inside the cell system of the ethmoid labyrinth posterior to the ethmoidal bulla.

The basal lamella is continuous with both anterior and posterior ethmoid cells and is used to define their separation. The medial extension of the basal lamella becomes the bony part of the middle turbinate itself; laterally it is continuous with the lamina papyracea. The vertical portion may be a wall of bone that swings laterally from the middle turbinate behind the ethmoidal bulla to continue as the lamina papyracea or it may be partially pneumatized. The indentations in the vertical portion of the basal lamella may be found medially, laterally, superiorly, inferiorly, or in some combination thereof.

Fig. 7.1. Parasagittal cut through the center of the ethmoid complex showing horizontal and vertical portions of the basal lamella.
Fig. 7.2. Same as Fig. 7.1 with relationship to inferior turbinate.

Fig. 7.3. Right side, zero degree lens, secretions from exit of infundibulum. Horizontal and vertical portions of basal lamella visualized by simple endoscopy.