About the Association of Lichen planus and Psoriasis

L.

Luigi

Naldi

Bergamo

Luigi Naldi, Paolo Sena, Tullio Cainelli for Gruppo Italiano Studi Epidemiologici in Dermatologia (GISED) Cattedra di Clinica Dermosifilopatica Università degli Studi di Milano Ospedali Riuniti, Largo Barozzi 1 I-24100 Bergamo (Italy)

Sir,

We read with interest the report by Shiohara et al. about the coexistence of lichen planus and psoriasis in a single patient in a recent issue of Dermatologica [1].

Between September 1986 and February 1988 the Gruppo Italiano Studi Epidemiologici in Dermatologia (GISED) conducted a multi-Letters to the Editor

Table 1. Characteristics of the lichen planus patients who gave a history of psoriasis
centre case-control study of lichen planus, focusing, in particular, on the association of lichen planus with liver diseases [2]. Twenty-seven Italian dermatological services participated, and 711 incident cases of lichen planus and 1,395 controls with newly diagnosed dermatological diseases other than lichen planus were collected. The history of previous dermatological diagnoses was recorded for cases and controls.

Twelve of the 711 subjects affected by lichen planus (1.7%) reported a diagnosis of psoriasis (95% confidence interval based on Poisson approximation = 0.8-2.6). Table 1 shows the general characteristics and the associated diseases of these subjects.

We also computed the frequency of psoriasis among controls, excluding from the analysis 125 controls who entered the study because of newly diagnosed psoriasis. Thirty-five of the 1,270 controls (2.7%) reported a diagnosis of psoriasis (95% confidence interval = 1.8-3.6). Even if the frequency of psoriasis was slightly higher among controls than among cases, the difference did not reach statistical significance. Coexistence of the two diseases is not as uncommon as suggested by Shiohara et al. , and the paucity of reports in the literature is probably due (as they said) to underreporting. Caution is needed in trying to assess the frequency of diseases in the population by means of 'case reports', particularly when dealing with disease association. Even if the possibility still remains that the association of lichen planus and psoriasis in the same patient may have a peculiar biological significance, in epidemiological terms the association may be considered as no more than coincidental.

References

Shiohara T, Hayakawa J, Nagashima M: Psoriasis and lichen planus: Coexistence in a single patient. Are both diseases mutually exclusive? Dermatologica 1989;179:178-182. Gruppo Italiano Studi Epidemiologici in Dermatologia (GISED): Lichen planus and liver diseases: A multicentre case-control study. Br Med J 1990;300:227-230.

Announcement

Hands-on Workshop of Phlebology and Sclerotherapy in Cooperation with the German Society of Phlebology and Proctology and the North American Society of Phlebology
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Prof. Dr. U. Schultz-Ehrenburg, University Department of Dermatology, St. Josef Hospital, Gudrunstrasse 56, D-4630 Bochum 1 (FRG), Tel. (0234) 509 423, and Anton Butie, MD, 101 South Rancho Santa Fe Road, Suite 302, Encinitas, CA 92024 (USA), Tel. (619) 942-