Prevention of Contact Dermatitis

Current Problems in Dermatology

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Prevention of Contact Dermatitis

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Preface
Contact dermatitis (CD) is an environmental disease par excellence: Without skin contact to irritants or allergens no one will develop CD. Furthermore, it is an extremely frequent, chronic and possibly disabling disease resulting in considerable economic damage to the individual and the community. Thirdly, it is basically a preventable disease, and prevention is a must considering that therapy is symptomatic and often of limited value.

While dermatologists do a marvellous job in diagnosing CD and elucidating its causes, CD prevention has been a neglected aspect of clinical dermatology. As a matter of fact, CD prevention is something that should not happen in hospitals or practices, but in the daily life of workers and consumers. Therefore, an integrated approach is needed involving many specialties: (1) chemists, toxicologists, pharmacists and cosmetologists in the risk prediction of chemicals and in the formulation of products; (2) safety engineers and occupational physicians in the assessment and minimization of risks at the workplace; (3) clinical dermatologists and allergologists in the early detection of new causes of CD and in secondary and tertiary prevention; (4) epidemiologists in the detection of target populations and situations for preventive action; (5) preventive medicine and public health specialists in the planning and realization of prevention projects; (6) economists and insurance specialists in the balancing of cost and benefit of preventive activities; (7) legislators in the definition of the legal requirements and regulating agencies in their application to the real world.

Valuable knowledge on disease prevention exists in all of the mentioned specialties, but this is the first time this information has been brought together in a text devoted to the preventive aspects of CD. We hope that this book will be useful both for planning preventive strategies and for the prevention of CD in the daily practice of dermatologists and occupational physicians. The editors would like to thank the contributors, all experts in the field, for their precise work and harmonious cooperation. Ms. Vogelhuber, Department of Dermatology, University of Zurich, provided important secretarial assistance. Without the kind support by the publisher, Dr. h.c. Thomas Karger, his technical staff, Ms. Liza Anyawike and Susanna Ludwig, and without the encouragement of the series editor, Prof. G. Burg, the making of this book would not have been possible.

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