Pointing the Way for DERMATOLOGY + PSYCHOSOMATICS

The journal DERMATOLOGY + PSYCHOSOMATICS was started two years ago with a first supplement issue, which contained the abstracts of the 8th International Conference for Dermatology and Psychiatry (ESDaP) in Paris, June 1999. The present edition of the journal contains selected abstracts of the 9th ESDaP Congress. 'Pointing the Way' has a symbolic significance, when we remember that the Congress is held in Barcelona, a city from which not only Columbus set the signs for fundamental change and renewal. Psychosomatic dermatology and its theories and therapeutic approaches are to be spread through the world from here. The Congress and also the journal will help – the Congress by assembling people from all over the world, and the journal by collecting and disseminating the international articles. DERMATOLOGY + PSYCHOSOMATICS has enjoyed successful development over the past two years. International contributions to important psychodermatological topics have been published. DERMATOLOGY + PSYCHOSOMATICS has become the organ for various national psychodermatological societies as well. We owe this development primarily to the dedicated authors and competent reviewers, who have done the excellent work behind the success. Our thanks to them all once again for heeding our plea in the first issue: 'With your help we will be able to start a journal (...) which creates a lively forum for all those involved in dermatology and psychosomatics.'

In addition to the selected abstracts from the 9th congress, this new issue of the journal contains original articles and case reports on psychosomatic aspects of alopecia areata, vulvodynia, psoriasis and atopic dermatitis: S. Freni et al. examined patients with alopecia areata with respect to psychiatric disturbances in comparison with psychiatric patients. The results based on a methodologically sound study confirm differences between the two patient groups, which are discussed in connection with psychoetiological aspects in alopecia areata patients. While Freni et al. select interpersonal relationship patterns as the criterion, Sayar et al. address the question of emotional disturbances by examining psychosocial disturbances. Thus patients with alopecia areata are investigated from two different but complementary perspectives. S. Scheewe et al. address the long-term effects of patient education programs in children and adolescents with psoriasis. This article reflects the increasing availability of such training programs for pa-

tients with chronic skin diseases. This development was stressed in the most recent issue of DERMATOLOGY + PSYCHOSOMATICS with a focus on patient training in atopic dermatitis. One patient group which is usually given little attention from a psychodermatological point of view is addressed by Fischer et al., who questioned patients with vulvar discomfort. The results are based on a relatively small patient sample and therefore are preliminary, but interesting further developments can be expected.

Finally, two case reports are presented which describe psychotherapy with patients suffering from atopic dermatitis or dermatitis artefacta. S. Consoli presents a clear description of a patient with dermatitis artefacta under psychoanalytical therapy. H. J. Eichinger also describes psychoanalytical therapy using the case of association of Alexander's general psychosomatic therapy of organ selection with Anzieu's 'skin-self' theory.

I hope that these articles offer multi-facetted psychosomatic dermatological reading and stimulate lively discussion.

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