Psychometric Instruments – Important Tools in the Quantification of Psychosomatic Dermatology

The present issue presents to the readers two main topics: a number of articles dealing with specific psychosomatic aspects of skin diseases and two articles that focus on methodology, presenting psychometric instruments for measuring psychosomatic aspects in patients with skin diseases.

A case report [Eberlein-König et al., 2003] on multiple chemical sensitivity emphasizes the importance of an interdisciplinary approach in patients with complex psychosomatic allergic symptoms. The cooperation between allergologists and psychologists or psychiatrists within the diagnostic and therapeutic procedure is described. Another report from Al Hawsawi et al. [2003] describes a self-mutilation disorder in a teenage boy in Saudi-Arabia. In this case, amelioration could be achieved by behavioral changes.

Papadopoulos and Walker [2003] investigate specific personality traits and coping styles in patients suffering from psoriatic arthropathy. The results reveal sex differences in patients with psoriatic arthropathy rather than differences between patients and healthy controls: female patients showed a more problem-oriented coping whereas males showed more acceptance. The article by Witt [2003] describes a new intervention program for patients with allergic reactions to pollen, including different psychological techniques ranging from behavior therapy to hypnosis. The results underline the influence of psychological interventions on immune reactions, indicated by histamine release.

The article of Augustin and Maier [2003] on psychosomatic aspects in patients with chronic wounds stresses the importance of psychological disturbances for the course of the disease, the prognosis, and the compliance of the patient.

Two articles present the validation of new questionnaires: the questionnaire on skin satisfaction described by Grolle et al. [2003] can be used to assess the attitude of a person towards

his or her own skin, either in patients with skin diseases or in healthy persons. Compared to already published questionnaires on psychosomatic aspects of dermatoses the questionnaire contains scales that additionally reflect some important aspects, such as the role of the skin in the regulation of closeness and distance. The article of Tsutsui et al. [2003] describes the validation of the Japanese version of the well-established itch-related cognition questionnaire for atopic dermatitis constructed by Ehlers et al. [1993] and underlines the intercultural transferability of psychometric instruments.

With the dual focus on psychosomatic aspects in clinical dermatology and psychometric methodology, the editors want to stress how important it is to use quantitative research instruments, such as the questionnaires, for gaining some substantial psychosomatic clinical knowledge.

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