Psychodermatology Has Grown out of Its Infancy

Dear Readers,

DERMATOLOGY + PSYCHOSOMATICS is in its 5th year now, comprising 4 issues per year. Since its start in 2000, 55 original papers, 9 review articles, 17 case reports, 10 education reports as well as numerous quizzes, letters to the editors and contributions for the practitioner, information by psychodermatologic societies, the pharma industry and book reviews have been published.

When the editors in chief and the German Karger Publisher team met for the first time, some 5 years ago, we wanted to find out if it was possible to establish a scientific and international journal on psychological and dermatological issues. The initial impulse was given by Matthias Augustin and Ina Zschocke, Freiburg, who had close contact with Karger; thus, even though they had some difficulty to convince Uwe Gieler to cooperate – the journal started with its first issue in 2000! Our belief in psychosomatic dermatology and the growing scientific community in this field provides the motivation required to make the journal. Meanwhile, the journal's success confirms that our idea came up at the right moment – the growing number of subscriptions allows an optimistic look at the future. Striving to offer high scientific quality as well as accurate and relevant information, the editors of DERMATOLOGY + PSYCHOSOMATICS are always happy to learn your opinion. Letters to the editors are usually published in the next issue of the journal.

Some articles published in DERMATOLOGY + PSYCHOSOMATICS have become well-renowned, e.g. those of Niemeier et al. [2002] on acne, Harth et al. [2002] on lifestyle drugs, and Koblenzer [2001] on psychotropic drugs in dermatology. Aspects of a psychosomatic liaison service in dermatology have been described by Fritzsche et al. [2001], and the review article on education programs for atopic dermatitis [Gieler et al., 2000] is regularly cited in other journals. The issues described there seem to provide an important aspect for many psy-

chotherapeutic and dermatologic practitioners. More and more articles on psychological aspects in skin and allergic diseases have been published in the past years, not only in our journal but also in high-impact journals like the British Journal of Dermatology, which includes a 'psychodermatology' section in almost every issue. Every relevant dermatology journal addresses this topic. We are proud to produce DERMATOLOGY + PSYCHOSOMATICS and are grateful for the fruitful and smooth cooperation with Karger Publishers.

In our opinion, the scientific level of the journal is still increasing, and the positive feedback from many readers encourages us to continue the journal. Due to strict and careful peer-reviewing of all manuscripts, the ratio of articles not accepted for publication has amounted to 10%. We wish to take this opportunity to thank all reviewers who have contributed through to the journal with their work.

Parallel to the development of the journal, research on psychodermatology has elucidated various aspects that help to better understand the patients as well as the causes of dermatological diseases.

There is increasing evidence of psychosomatic factors in dermatological disorders. In the last year alone, more articles were published in this field than could be recognized by the editors of DERMATOLOGY + PSYCHOSOMATICS. Some new topics have emerged in the field of neuroimmunology and have given insight into neurogenic inflammations in dermatological disorders. Marconi et al. [2003] demonstrated the expression and function of neurotrophins and their receptors in cultured human keratinocytes and the functional neurotrophin network which may contribute to neurogenic inflammation. Järvikallio et al. [2002] studied mast cells, nerves and neuropeptides in atopic dermatitis and nummular eczema, and their findings corresponded to that exact hypothesis. Therefore, it can no longer be doubted that patients with atopic dermatitis do react to stress. Kimata [2003] showed that comput-

er-induced stress increases allergen-specific skin wheal responses in patients with atopic dermatitis. Computer-induced stress also increased plasma levels of substance P and VIP in atopic dermatitis patients, but not in patients with rhinitis allergica.

On the other hand, brain research has been developing increasingly. The question why sometimes dermatological patients are affected by paresthesias is investigated in a study by Kiss et al. [2003]. This research team could show the neural substrates of microstimulation-evoked tingling in human somatosensory thalamus. The itch studies by Wallengren [2002], for instance, have pointed out that cutaneous field stimulation of sensory nerve fibres reduces itch without affecting contact dermatitis.

Psychological studies have demonstrated in more detail the importance of early child-mother interaction. A study by Onozawa et al. [2001] showed that infant massage may improve mother-infant interaction in mothers with postnatal depression. When babies are crying, the amygdala, a special brain region, shows significantly more activity in parents compared to nonparents [Seifritz et al., 2003]. Slack-Smith et al. [2004] worked out that absence of respiratory illness depends on the time spent in childcare plus the family history of bronchitis. And now we know that our perception of odor and color of cosmetic products is associated with psychophysiological reactivity, as a team from Lyon [Barkat et al., 2003] has shown. Another example is shyness, which evolves out of childhood behavior, as an article published in *Science* demonstrated; when Schwartz et al. [2003] showed pictures of strangers to young adults, they observed more activity in the amygdala of thirteen 21-year-old subjects with a history of

shyness than in those who had been oozing confidence since they had attended kindergarten. Even in dermatological disorders merely associated with psychological aspects, i.e. basal cell carcinoma, lifestyle factors and smoking may increase the risk to contract them, as Milan et al. [2003] could show in twin pairs. With regard to these and other articles published in various important journals and evidencing the hypothesis that the skin is a psychosomatic issue, we are looking forward to further sharing and exchanging with you our increasing experiences regarding psychosomatic and psychological aspects in skin diseases.

In the present issue, you will find an overview by Lerda and Angelini [2004], Turin, on psychosomatic aspects of atopic dermatitis. This chronic skin condition is by far the dermatological disease most studied with regard to psychological aspects. Furthermore, one of the original articles deals with this disease and examines psychobiological pathways of atopic disease [Buske-Kirschbaum et al., 2004]. Another endocrinological viewpoint is shown by Harth et al. [2004] who have demonstrated possible influences of endocrine stress parameters on male fertility. Meiss et al. [2004] have yielded positive results in the treatment of glossodynia when giving gabapentin to the affected patients. We hope you will also enjoy this issue's education section which addresses delusional parasitosis.

We are glad to be part of a process which integrates psychological issues into a diversity of dermatologic issues, and we hope to present you once again a series of articles that may prove useful for clinical practice or research.

Matthias Augustin, Freiburg i.Br.

Uwe Gieler, Giessen

Ina Zschocke, Freiburg i.Br.

References

- Barkat S, Thomas-Danguin T, Bensafi M, Rouby M, Sicard G: Odor and color of cosmetic products: Correlations between subjective judgement and autonomous nervous system response. *Int J Cosmetic Sci* 2003;25:273–283.
- Buske-Kirschbaum A, Ebrecht M, Kern S, Höllig H, Gierens A, Hellhammer D: Personality characteristics and their association with biological stress responses in patients with atopic dermatitis. *Dermatol Psychosom* 2004;5:12–16.
- Fritzsch K, Ott J, Wetzlar V, Zschocke I, Augustin M: Characteristics of patients receiving psychotherapeutic interventions within a psychosomatic liaison service in dermatology. *Dermatol Psychosom* 2001; 2:184–190.
- Gieler U, Kupfer J, Niemeier V, Brosig B, Stangier U: Atopic eczema prevention programs – a new therapeutic concept for secondary prevention. *Dermatol Psychosom* 2000;1:138–147.
- Harth W, Linse R: Male fertility: Endocrine stress parameters and coping. *Dermatol Psychosom* 2004;5: 22–29.
- Harth W, Wendler M, Linse R: Lifestyle drugs and body dysmorphic disorder: Overview on a new phenomenon in dermatology. *Dermatol Psychosom* 2002;3:72–76.
- Järvikallio A, Harvima IT, Naukkarinen A: Mast cells, nerves and neuropeptides in atopic dermatitis and nummular eczema. *Arch Dermatol Res* 2003;295: 2–7.
- Kimata H: Enhancement of allergic skin wheal responses and in vitro allergen-specific IgE production by computer-induced stress in patients with atopic dermatitis. *Brain Behav Immun* 2003;17: 134–138.
- Kiss ZHT, Anderson T, Hansen T, Kirstein D, Suchowsky O, Hu B: Neural substrates of microstimulation-evoked tingling: A chronaxie study in human somatosensory thalamus. *Eur J Neurosci* 2003;18: 728–732.
- Koblenzer CS: The use of psychotropic drugs in dermatology. *Dermatol Psychosom* 2001;2:167–177.
- Lerda S, Angelini G: Psychosomatic conditions in atopic dermatitis. *Dermatol Psychosom* 2004;5: 5–11.
- Marconi A, Terracina M, Fila C, Franchi J, Bonté F, Romagnoli G, Maurelli R, Failla CM, Dumas M, Pincelli C: Expression and function of neurotrophins and their receptors in cultured human keratinocytes. *J Invest Dermatol* 2003;121:1515–1523.
- Meiss F, Fiedler E, Taube KM, Marsch WC, Fischer M: Gabapentin in the treatment of glossodynia. *Dermatol Psychosom* 2004;5:17–21.
- Milán T, Verkasalo PK, Kaprio J, Koskenvuo M: Lifestyle differences in twin pairs discordant for basal cell carcinoma of the skin. *Brit J Dermatol* 2003;149:115–123.
- Niemeier V, Kupfer J, Gieler U: Acne is not a trivial disease! Psychosomatic aspects in routine therapy. *Dermatol Psychosom* 2002;3:61–71.
- Onozawa K, Glover V, Adams D, Modi N, Kumar RC: Infant massage improves mother-infant interaction for mothers with postnatal depression. *J Affect Disord* 2001;63:201–207.
- Schwartz CE, Wright CI, Shin LM, Kagan J, Rauch SL: Inhibited and uninhibited infants 'grown up': Adult amygdala response to novelty. *Science* 2003;300: 1952–1953.
- Seifritz E, Esposito F, Neuheff JG, Luthi A, Mustovic H, Dammann G, von Bardeleben U, Radue EW, Cirillo S, Tedeschi G, Di Salle F: Differential sex-independent amygdala response to infant crying and laughing in parents versus nonparents. *Biol Psychiatry* 2003;54:1367–1375.
- Slack-Smith LM, Read AW, Stanley FJ: Absence from childcare for respiratory illness. *Child Care Health Dev* 2004;30:29–37.
- Wallengren J: Cutaneous field stimulation of sensory nerve fibres reduces itch without affecting contact dermatitis. *Allergy* 2002;57:1195–1199.