Foreword

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The current volume of proceedings contains the papers and posters presented at the 5th Asian Pacific Congress on Antisepsis (APCA) which was held in Cairns, Australia, on July 14–16, 2005, under the competent chairmanship of Prof. Hiroyoshi Kobayashi of Tokyo Healthcare University, Tokyo, Japan.

Mundipharma started the APCA series in 1987 in Hong Kong with the purpose of providing researchers and clinicians for 3 days with a platform for presenting data of their research and exchanging information on their experiences in the field of antisepsis and the use of topical antiseptics, especially povidone-iodine (PVP-I).

After the initial success the event was subsequently repeated, first in 1993 and then in a 4-year cycle allowing for a continuous update of antisepsis research and efficacy and safety of antiseptics with the focus shifting from chemistry and basic efficacy testing to broader health-oriented topics, including epidemiology, hospital hygiene and wound care.

Hospital hygiene, especially that regarding nosocomial infections, gained increasing attention during the last decade due to growing concerns worldwide about the development of bacterial resistance to antibiotics.

In Cairns, several studies were presented dealing with that important issue including infection surveillance in hospitals, in the intensive-care unit, in surgical practice and in the geriatric ward. They demonstrate the ubiquitousness of nosocomial infections and the importance of strategic planning in the avoidance and management of the problem.

They also confirm earlier conclusions that especially in conditions where bacterial resistance prevails the unique microbicidal effectiveness of PVP-I makes it the first choice for preventive and therapeutic antisepsis in affected environments.

Another issue concerns the threat of epidemic viral infections as currently the ‘avian flu’ or, during the recent past, the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS). The viricidal effectiveness of PVP-I on the SARS virus as well as on avian influenza A viruses may suggest its usefulness, for example as gargle or hand disinfectant, as part of a catalogue of preventive measures.

More generally, oral PVP-I preparations have stimulated increasing clinical interest as can be seen from the various studies in oral surgery, periodontal infection and other pathological conditions.

For operative and other invasive manipulations such as catheter insertion, PVP-I has been a mainstay for many years. In Cairns, a number of clinical and laboratory studies were presented in this classic indication including such specialities as cataract surgery and the management of giant omphaloceles.

A well-documented clinical study showed the beneficial effects of PVP-I on chronic wounds as in venous leg ulcers. While this and similar applications have been described repeatedly albeit rather anecdotally, it is an interesting contribution not only for the systematic approach, but also in the context of the question about the usefulness of PVP-I in open wounds since the need of antiseptic measures in wound care has been a subject of ongoing discussions.

In Cairns, a special panel was therefore organized with experts on wound healing to debate the potential clinical implications of the antiseptic use of PVP-I.

Particular attention deserves the report from Australia about a careful meta-analysis of papers pertinent to this question which, after the exclusion of qualitatively poor publications, resulted in a clear argument in favour of the hypothesis that PVP-I is not impairing tissue regeneration. To surgeons this finding could be important as it may reduce the dilemma of using PVP-I in open wounds, especially when the risk of infection is imminent.

In this context the compilation of data showing significantly improved wound healing with a novel liposomal preparation containing 3% PVP-I (Repithel[®]) is also interesting. Corresponding cytological studies add useful cell biological information about the effects of PVP-I alone or in combination with liposomes.

We are indebted to all speakers and poster presenters for their valuable contributions to the 5th APCA and, consequently, these Proceedings. They are an impressive documentation of continuing antisepsis research under various aspects, be it in the laboratory, in the hospital setting or in the public domain.