

Preface

Psoriasis is a chronic, currently incurable, inflammatory skin disease with considerable clinical heterogeneity, which affects approximately 2% of the population. Since skin diseases like psoriasis are not usually life-threatening, their negative impact on individuals is often underestimated by society and even by health care professionals. However, the comparison of psoriasis with other chronic debilitating medical and psychiatric conditions confirms that psoriasis produces an immense detriment in quality of life. Furthermore, a proportion of psoriasis patients are still frustrated and dissatisfied with the overall treatment and management of their disease. Psoriasis is increasingly recognized as being associated with a higher rate of comorbidities, like depression, psoriatic arthritis, Crohn's disease and, particularly in severe psoriasis, metabolic syndrome and cardiovascular diseases. The reasons for the latter associations still remain to be fully elucidated, and may involve genetic and lifestyle factors (nicotine or alcohol abuse, high-fat foods, lack of regular physical exercise, stress) and possibly the degree of psoriatic skin inflammation. The presence of comorbidities, like metabolic syndrome and cardiovascular diseases, may profoundly influence the treatment options, e.g. by contraindications to antipsoriatic medications (acitretin, cyclosporine). Moreover, the association between psoriasis and the above-mentioned comorbidities make an interdisciplinary treatment approach together with the general practitioner, psychiatrists, rheumatologists, cardiologists and/or diabetologists of increasing importance.

In recent years, great advances have been made in the understanding of the pathogenesis of psoriasis. This has led to novel systemic immunomodulatory therapies (biologicals), which are characterized by more specific targeting of defined molecules in the pathological pathways involved in psoriasis. Such biologicals may achieve acute and long-term disease control, with improvements in the quality of life of a significant amount of patients with moderate-to-severe psoriasis. Although the efficacy of many of these agents is unquestionable, the safety of long-term treatment needs to be firmly established in the coming years. This is an tremendously exciting and demanding time for psoriasis patients and dermatologists, who practically every year are con-

fronted with the approval of novel therapies and an immense amount of information on psoriasis. However, many well-established and trusted treatments also exist, which may achieve disease control in numerous patients. It is fundamental that dermatologists are well informed about both conventional and novel psoriasis treatments, and use them correctly to minimize toxicity and maximize efficacy and adherence to therapy. Thus, therapy of psoriasis nowadays can be quite challenging, and includes knowledge about effects and side effects of various drugs, as well as consideration of many factors including age, severity, phenotype, localization, comorbidities, response and contraindications to therapies, trigger factors (like infections and concomitant drugs) and, last but not least, the patient's perception, quality of life and social factors.

This textbook has been written by renowned experts on psoriasis and comprehensively describes clinical features, comorbidities and treatment modalities, including topical therapies, different phototherapeutic options, and both conventional and novel systemic psoriasis treatments. It also includes chapters on the management of childhood psoriasis and psoriasis treatment in difficult locations, like the scalp, face, flexures, palm/soles and nails. I have invited experts with years of practical experience in dealing with psoriatic patients to summarize the relevant aspects of daily psoriasis management, and have also particularly encouraged them to include their personal viewpoints and treatment strategies. It is hoped that the information in this book will be useful for trainee and practising dermatologists, as well as non-dermatologists, and help to improve the management and quality of life of all of our patients with mild or moderate-to-severe psoriasis.

I would like to thank the international panel of distinguished authors for their time and effort, as well as the staff of Karger for their support with this project. We are also very grateful to Abbott, Essex and Wyeth for their financial support. Finally, I would like to dedicate this book to my family for their wonderful support and love.

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