

'The Future Is Here' – ESDaP Congress in Brussels 2003

The present issue of DERMATOLOGY + PSYCHOSOMATICS follows the 10th International Congress of the European Society for Dermatology and Psychiatry (ESDaP) in Brussels which took place May 8–10. It was a stimulating congress with lectures and contributions for the most part of a high scientific standard. More than 200 participants from all over the world discussed important and interesting topics of psychodermatology during these days. The abstracts of the congress are published in this issue and I am convinced that you will find interesting aspects when studying them. The lecture given by Katharine Philipps was particularly interesting for me. She highlighted various aspects of psychiatric comorbidity and often suicidal ideation of patients with body dysmorphic disorder and showed interesting therapeutic possibilities, e.g. cognitive behaviour and psychopharmacological approaches [Philipps, 2003].

At every ESDaP congress the Dutch Herman Musaph Foundation hands over the Herman Musaph award to an internationally outstanding scientist who is highly committed in the field of psychosomatic dermatology. Herman Musaph published important articles on psychosomatic dermatology at a time when most dermatologists and psychiatrists were not even thinking of psychogenic influences in dermatological diseases, yet [Musaph, 1967]. This year, the prize was given to Emiliano Panconesi well-known to all of you from his outstanding book 'Psychosomatic Dermatology' [Panconesi, 1984]. In his inspiring lecture he showed us that much of what seemed to be dreams of the future some years ago has become true in the meantime. Also, former prize winner Caroline Koblenzer well-known for her famous book on 'Psychocutaneous Diseases' [Koblenzer, 1987] presented an overview of her experience in psychodermatology in the last 20 years. Emiliano Panconesi and his special interest in psychoneuroimmunology was taken up by Torello Lotti who provided an insight into the near scientific future of psychoneuroimmunology [Lotti, 2003].

More and more research is done with regard to this aspect. A recent study in this field stems from a Finnish research group

which showed a clear connection between mast cells, nerves and neuropeptides in atopic dermatitis and nummular eczema. The presented results of this study suggest that the alterations in nerves and neuropeptides may be linked with the cutaneous inflammatory reaction in general [Järvikallio et al., 2003]. Another article on the same topic points out the close relationship between neuropeptides and allergic diseases [Noga et al., 2003]. Hopefully, once we better understand this pathophysiology we will be able to develop corresponding therapeutic strategies. Wallengren who has been studying allergic reactions and psychogenic influences gives an example of how this might happen. He found that cutaneous field stimulation of sensory nerve fibers may reduce itch without affecting contact dermatitis [Wallengren, 2002].

Well, let us look at our journal. DERMATOLOGY + PSYCHOSOMATICS primarily serves as an interdisciplinary journal and has gradually gained readers all over the world. The number of readers exceeds by far the number of subscribed copies. We know that because manuscripts are submitted for publication in our journal from all over the world. We are proud that DERMATOLOGY + PSYCHOSOMATICS is an international journal which is more and more recognised by the scientific community in dermatology as well as in psychotherapy and psychosomatics.

The present issue contains original articles of a very high standard reflecting recent developments of psychosomatic dermatology. Kupfer et al. [2003] developed questionnaires for children and adolescents to evaluate itch and coping behaviour in atopic dermatitis. Stangier et al. [2003] validated a questionnaire for body dysmorphic disorder and looked for a reasonably cut-off value to use it as a screening instrument. Seikowski et al. [2003] describe the role of psychosomatic factors in the development and course of prurigo simplex subacuta, an often underestimated skin disease with clear connections to psychological problems.

Enjoy the new issue of the journal and give us your positive or critical comments on it.

Uwe Gieler, Gießen

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Die Zeitschrift erscheint vierteljährlich; pro Jahr erscheint 1 Band zu je 4 Hefen. Bezugspreise für Jahrgang 4, 2003: Print-Abonnement EUR 115,-, Online-Abonnement EUR 115,-, Kombi-Abonnement Print/Online 143,-, einschließlich MWSt., zuzüglich Postgebühren. Bitte erkundigen Sie sich nach reduzierten Preisen für Studenten und Mitglieder dermatologischer Gesellschaften. Der Abonnementpreis ist im Voraus zahlbar. Das Abonnement der Zeitschrift läuft weiter, wenn es nicht spätestens 4 Wochen vor Abschluss eines Bandes abbestellt wird. Abonnementbestellungen können bei jeder Buchhandlung oder direkt beim Verlag aufgegeben werden:

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Anzeigen

S. Karger
Verlag für Medizin und Naturwissenschaften GmbH,
Lörracher Str. 16a, D-79115 Freiburg,
Tel. +49 761 45 20 70.
Gültig ist die Preisliste Nr. 4 vom 1. Januar 2003.

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Lörracher Str. 16a, D-79115 Freiburg, Germany

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Anzeigenleitung: Susanne Meister
Produktionsleitung: Georg Brunner

Herstellung:
KONKORDIA GmbH, Bühl
Das Medienunternehmen