

Therapy of Skin Diseases

A Worldwide Perspective on Therapeutic Approaches and Their Molecular Basis

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Preface

Treatment of skin diseases has changed remarkably during the last decade. This is largely the result of a better understanding of the molecular and cellular basis of many skin diseases. Thus, novel targets have been identified and specific drugs developed which directly interfere with or alter the disease processes. This change is readily apparent when considering the novel agents available for psoriasis and atopic dermatitis, and also for viral and other infectious skin diseases. Interestingly, many of these new agents are administered systemically either orally or by subcutaneous injection. And yet, as with all forms of drug therapy, these highly efficacious agents can also be associated with severe side effects and drug-induced toxicity. Accordingly, the dermatologist must be aware of the medical status of the patient as well as all other medications that are being prescribed concomitantly. Careful monitoring of the risk:benefit ratio is always critical.

Simultaneously, with the rapid development of novel therapeutics, there has been a major evolution in the clinical practice of dermatology with considerable variations across different areas of the world. In European countries, the discipline is relatively broad, in some countries including allergy and phlebology, as well as dermatologic surgery and dermatologic oncology. In European countries, patients with skin disease are often treated as in-patients by dermatologists, whereas in the United States, this occurs only rarely and the patients are admitted to beds assigned to Internal Medicine and dermatologists consult on their management. Asian dermatology has been profoundly affected by both European and American dermatology and the selection of therapeutic agents often reflects those influences.

The result of these developments is that regional differences are commonplace in the treatment of skin diseases, some correlating with the dermatologic features of patients from diverse ethnic backgrounds, others relating to variations in the different health care systems and/or the medical education and the awareness of dermatologists regarding particular treatment options. In the age of Internet, novel therapies are instantly available and potentially applicable to patients globally.

This book was conceived to address these changes and it has two major aims. First, it summarizes novel therapeutic procedures that are based on understanding the pathophysiology of skin diseases. Second, it aims to bring together in one place the variability of treatment modalities employed in the practice of dermatology around the world in Asia, Europe, and the USA. Every effort has been made to assure that all chapters indicate global variations either in the occurrence or the expression of skin

diseases and their treatment. All manuscripts have been reviewed carefully by experts familiar with the practice of dermatology in Asia, Europe, and the USA. It is our hope that this book will prove to be a valuable reference tool for dermatologists everywhere.

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