

was reviewed by Professor Hugh Zachariae. In addition to describing the side effects of methotrexate and cyclosporine, he also reminded the audience that acitretin may be used in the treatment of arthritis.

Following the discussion of local and systemic therapies of arthritis, Dr Michael Heidenheim described the use of balneotherapy. This ancient therapeutic option has significant positive effects on the general well-being of patients and may have specific beneficial effects to both skin and joint disease. However, the studies made in the area of balneotherapy do not meet the usual criteria for randomisation and control used in other medical studies. The validity of the methods is therefore

less well established. In spite of the methodological weaknesses there is a large volume of studies that suggest that balneotherapy has many beneficial effects.

Finally, Gregor Jemec described the development of new biological agents for the treatment of psoriatic arthritis. Several approaches are being tested for the treatment of psoriasis, and although they have mainly been assessed for skin disease only, some have shown promise in the treatment of arthritis as well. Biologicals, which have already been approved for clinical use, fortunately appear to fall into this latter category.

Responsible and professional patient organisations are a major

partner in the continued development of dermatology. The NORDPSO is to be congratulated for putting together this most interesting programme. The symposium was very well organised and highly informative, and many dermatologists would undoubtedly find similar symposia equally stimulating. It is my hope that many of them will be given the opportunity to participate in the near future.

## References

1. Zachariae H, Zachariae R, Blomqvist K, et al. Quality of life and prevalence of arthritis reported by 5795 members of the Nordic Psoriasis Associations. *Acta Derm Venerol* 2002; 82: 108-113.

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## Skin Allergy and Inflammation, in Stockholm, December 2-6, 2002

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A postgraduate course in Skin Allergy and Inflammation was held at the Karolinska Hospital, Stockholm, December 2-6, 2002. The participants had a various background, and included residents in dermatology and venereology, pediatric allergologist, psychologists, biologists, also students from the Allergy Centre at the Karolinska Institutet. Different aspects were



discussed regarding the skin barrier, atopic eczema, contact eczema and psoriasis. The course leaders (standing in the front of the photo) were: Professor Klas Nordlind (*right*), Assistant Professor Lena Lundeberg

(*middle*), both from the Department of Dermatology, Karolinska Hospital, and Professor Magnus Lindberg (*left*), Department of Occupational and Environmental Dermatology, Norrbacka, Stockholm.