EDITORIAL

Acta on the net – and some highlights

In our continuing effort to speed up publication of Acta Dermato-Venereologica, the electronic version of the journal is a most welcome and valuable addition. The electronic journal is actually available to subscribers at least 3 weeks ahead of the printed version. Admission is simple for regular subscribers. At the homepage of Acta Dermato-Venereologica (http://www.acta.dermato-venereologica.c.se), under the heading "Electronic versions" you are instructed how to receive access to the on-line versions. If you press "Register now" in this second web-site, you will be asked for your registration number, and will later receive a password. If you are uncertain, please contact our publisher (www.scup.no).

The review process is now quicker, and this, too, has accelerated our publication times. Mean time from submission to initial verdict is currently less than two months. A further encouraging fact is that the impact factor of the journal continues to rise; in 1997 the figure was 1.091 compared to 1.076 in the previous year. Soon we will know the figure for 1998.

In this issue

It is well known that dermatoscopy increases diagnostic accuracy and facilitates clinical decision-making in cases of pigmented lesions. In a previous issue of Acta, Lorentzen et al. (1999; 79: 301) discussed the value of dermatoscopy in "expert" and "non-expert" melanoma diagnosis. Comfortingly, and not surprisingly, the "experts" were found to be the most skilled, indeed further increasing their diagnostic sensitivity and specificity when applying dermatoscopy. In this issue (pp. 469–472), this same group of scientists compare the power of two different dermatoscopic methods to discriminate melanomas from other pigmented skin lesions – plain dermatoscopy and the dermatoscopic ABCD system. The acronym ABCD stands for Assymetry, Border, Colour and Differentiated structure (dots, globules, network, streaming and homogenous areas), features that are expressed in a scoring system. In an accurate study of 232 patients the diagnostic accuracy was found to be higher for simple dermatoscopy than using the dermatoscopic scoring system. It will be interesting to see if other melanoma centres come to the same conclusion.

Photodynamic therapy is currently in vogue for treating cancers of the skin and several articles on this subject have recently appeared in Acta (1999; 79: 147–149, 204–206, 400–401). Conceptually, this is a very interesting approach that could be applied in several other non-malignant conditions of the skin. In this issue, Robinson et al. (pp. 451–455) extend their previous observation about photodynamic therapy in psoriasis. They study 10 patients with plaque psoriasis who received a topical application of 5-aminolaevulinic acid followed by a broad-band visible irradiation 3 times per week for a maximum of 4 weeks. Out of 19 treated sites, 4 cleared, 10 responded but did not clear and 5 showed no improvement. Although the result is promising, the side-effects are intolerable to many patients and the authors conclude that because of the pain experienced and the unpredictability of the result, this type of photodynamic therapy is unsuitable in the treatment of psoriasis.

There is growing evidence indicating a true difference in the prevalence of atopic disease and asthma between west and east Europe. In addition, there is a significantly higher risk of sensitization and respiratory symptoms among children living in urban compared to rural areas. These and many other findings indicate that environmental factors, in addition to genetic predisposition, play an important role in the prevalence of atopic disease. In this issue, Dotterud & Falk (pp. 448–450) present the results of a self-administered questionnaire distributed to 3600 subjects in the Russian town of Nikel on the Kola peninsula. The reason that Nikel was chosen is that this reason is known to be heavily polluted by airborne sulphur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide and heavy metals. The cumulative incidence of atopic disease in Nikel was found to be 11%, which indicates atopic diseases among adults are less frequent in heavily polluted arctic Russia than in western industrialized countries. Yet, smoking is very common, especially among Russian men (53%), and the keeping of domestic pets is high (52%). This suggests that air pollution is not a strong determinant in the development of allergic diseases, but is associated with bronchitis and unspecific respiratory symptoms. The reason for the lower prevalence of atopic diseases in a polluted arctic Russian town needs to be further investigated.

Finally, in this issue the battle between pro-Mohs and anti-Mohs readers goes on in the correspondence section! Not unexpectedly, Sam Shuster's debate article on micrographic surgery in a previous issue of Acta has elicited strong reactions (pp. 498–499). Enjoy yourself!

Anders Vahlquist
Editor-in-Chief

 ISSN 0001-5555