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Skin diseases after organ transplantation

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“Skin diseases after organ transplantation” presents a comprehensive overview of the various complications occurring after organ transplantation. The book is timely, given the increasing numbers of organ transplant recipients. As approximately 30 years have passed since the first solid organ transplants, enough time has elapsed to investigate the various complications of long term pharmacological immunosuppression. Although focussing on cutaneous complications and symptoms, the book is broadly based, also covering preexisting skin diseases with their changes in appearance and course after transplantation and subsequent immunosuppression. The book covers, furthermore, the cutaneous symptoms of secondary infections together with the available diagnostic procedures, and secondary malignancies developing either from lesions existing prior to transplantation and immunosuppression, or from lesions occurring during immunosuppressive treatment. In addition, the basics of and the guidelines for the adjunct treatment with systemic and topical retinoids are dealt with. Retinoid-based therapies are familiar to most dermatologists; however, the particular aspects of their application in patients with cutaneous side effects of chronic

pharmacological immunosuppression may not be common knowledge to all dermatologists who see transplant recipients on a consultant basis. The chapters on retinoids offer interesting aspects to all physicians in charge of transplant patients or who monitor patients under chronic immunosuppression.

Most importantly, almost all the authors point out the necessity for careful and repeated inspection of the skin and mucosal sites by trained dermatologists for patients after organ transplantation, and almost all authors stress the importance of interdisciplinary cooperation between transplant surgeons, nephrologists, gastroenterologists, cardiologists, and dermatologists.

The contents are arranged in I. General topics, II. Infectious diseases, III. Neoplastic disorders, IV. Prevention and treatment of neoplastic disorders, V. Miscellaneous disorders, and VI. General guidelines. Each chapter is rounded off by extensive references to help the reader find therapeutic studies or epidemiological investigations. The index is not too extensive but useful for finding the most important physiological, pathological, molecular, clinical, diagnostical and therapeutic terms. The appendix consists mainly of characteristical clinical pictures complemented by typical histological figures.

The coverage of most of the topics in dermatology and transplantation medicine, ranging from the basics in immunology of the skin and photobiology /photoimmunology to dermatological manifestations, prophylaxis and therapy of the various complications, is relatively complete. However, contributions on autoimmune diseases that may develop during immunosuppressive

treatment, e.g. bullous pemphigoid or paraneoplastic pemphigus are missing. The fact that reports on autoimmune bullous diseases in chronically immunosuppressed patients are not often found in the current literature does not necessarily mean that they occur as rarely. My recent experience leads me to believe that these “secondary autoimmune diseases” may be overlooked.

The Section on the “Prevention and treatment of neoplastic disorders” includes a comprehensive overview of the basic and practical aspects of photoprotection. However, the possible prophylactic and therapeutic effects of UV radiation are not discussed. In particular, advances in the prevention of organ rejection by extracorporeal photochemotherapy (e.g. heart transplantation) or in the treatment of chronic graft-versus-host disease by various photochemotherapeutic methods including extracorporeal photochemotherapy, have been applied successfully in the recent past. One has to take into account, however, that most of these publications have appeared only recently, probably after the preparation of this book.

“Skin diseases after organ transplantation” is excellent and enjoyable to read for dermatologists as well as for non-dermatologists. It should be in the library of every physician concerned with the well-being and survival of organ transplant patients and patients under chronic pharmacological immunosuppression. As the book also covers numerous practical aspects, I would suggest having a copy in every outpatient clinic attended by transplant recipients.

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