Chapter 16:
Algorithmic approach to a dermatological diagnosis
16.1 Urticaria

To conclude this pictorial presentation of the most common skin diseases for the general practitioner, we thought it would be interesting to include the modern diagnostic procedure in dermatology applied to an everyday problem: urticaria.

If duration is longer than 6 weeks:
Chronic idiopathic urticaria
Physical urticaria

- Simple or retarded dermographism
- Solar urticaria
- Cholinergic urticaria
- Cold urticaria
- Heat urticaria
- Aquagenic urticaria
- Vibratory angio-oedema
- Delayed pressure urticaria
- No Physical urticaria
Physical urticaria

Simple or retarded dermographism

Rub with a blunt tip.

other disease

Continue ▶
Physical urticaria

Solar urticaria

Photosensitivity test.

other disease

Continue ➤
Physical urticaria

Cholinergic urticaria

Small papules induced by heat, physical effort, stress.
Physical urticaria

Cold urticaria

Test with ice cube sheathed in plastic.

other disease

Continue ▶
Physical urticaria

Heat urticaria
Test with test-tube of hot water.

Aquagenic urticaria
Immersion test: hand in water at ambient temperature.

Vibratory angio-oedema
Professional circumstances (particularly pneumatic hammer).

other disease
Continue ▶
Physical urticaria

Delayed pressure urticaria

Test by pressure with a weight strapped on to the body.
Provoked by direct contact with a substance

Contact urticaria

Rapid result patch test, prick test or scratch test.

other origin
Continue
Hereditary angioneurotic oedema

Investigate for deficiency of C1 esterase inhibitor.

Continue
Lesions persisting at the same place for more than 24h, not very itchy, accompanied by joint pains and myalgias; histopathological appearance that of vasculitis.

Investigate for:

- acute lupus erythematosus (1-3)
- Still’s disease
- macroglobulinaemia
- blood disease
- hyperthyroidism
- urticarial vasculitis (4)

other origin

Continue
Medicamentous or food allergy

Painstaking history with regard to drugs and food

- Drugs
  Especially acetylsalicylic acid (see photos)
- Food
  Especially preservatives and colourings

Do provocation tests.

other origin
Continue
Infectious origin

- Hepatitis A (photo)
Exceptional case of figured urticaria revealing hepatitis A in its initial phase. The yellowish colour of the central oedematous (urticated zone) is caused by accumulation of bilirubin in the oedema fluid.

- Hepatitis B or C
- Infectious mononucleosis
- Parasitosis
- Focus of bacterial infection
- Focus of mycotic infection

other origin
Continue ▶