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CLINICAL CLASSIFICATION OF TATTOO REACTIONS

Jørgen Serup¹.

¹*Department of Dermatology, Bispebjerg University Hospital, the Tattoo Clinic; (Copenhagen, Denmark).*

Aim: The diagnosis of tattoos and tattoo reactions according to the WHO classification of diseases is obscure and need accuracy. Tattoos and tattoo reactions are coded under the group Morbi pigmentationis cutis alia, code L81.8E with no further specification. Diagnosis of tattoo reactions in the clinic relies on local tradition and individual conclusion by the dermatologist. Often the conclusion from biopsy and histopathology is simply translated into a clinical diagnosis. Descriptive patterns such as “lichenoid”, “granulomatous” and “pseudolymphomatous” are non specific and non discriminative, and may coincide in the same biopsy. There is a need for a rational diagnosis classification system, which primarily relies on clinical signs and symptoms.

Methods: Based on a large material and broad intake of patients with tattoo reactions and adverse effects as observed in the Tattoo Clinic since 2008, the patients (n approx. 350, October 2013) were grouped into those with complaints or complications, and the complications were divided into infectious and non infectious complications. The subgroups were further specified into a number of entities. Final classification of allergic reactions awaits the conclusion of supplementary studies, which shall define simple clinical criteria for allergic tattoo reactions.

Results: The major groups of non infectious events were represented by “plateau” (lichen alike), papulo-nodular, hyperkeratotic-exophytic, ulcero-necrotic, photosensitivity, intermittent (urticaria alike), pigment leakage and lymphopathy, neuro-sensory, generalised/systemic, and miscellaneous reaction patterns. Reactions supposed to be allergic in nature displayed three different reaction patterns and included autoimmunisation with affection of normal skin. Infectious events were specified according to their clinical presentation and aetiology. Examples are discussed. Figures are displayed in a photo gallery included in the poster session.

Conclusion: A new system for clinical diagnosis of tattoo reactions and events argued from clinical signs and symptoms and the suggested pathomechanism is under development. Such system may better guide therapeutic interventions described in a decision tree or algorithm. A final and validated version may be proposed for inclusion in of the WHO disease classification system. Universal diagnosis standard is essential for progress of international research on tattoos and tattoo reactions.