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medical dermatology update

questions and answers

Silicone implants

Q: Is it true that silicone breast implants were approved by the FDA again?

A: The Food and Drug General and Plastic Surgery Devices Panel approved Inamed Corp's silicone gel-filled breast implants with the stipulation that they continue to study patients for at least 10 years to evaluate them for rupture and systemic and local side effects.

Acne and steroids

Q: I have a teenage son who works out regularly in the gym and has severe acne. With all the recent media attention regarding steroid usage among teenagers, I am concerned. Can acne be a sign of steroid usage? What are the other dangers?

A: Acne is common among teenagers but can also be a sign of anabolic steroid usage. Other skin manifestations of anabolic steroids include rosacea, seborrhea, folliculitis, stretch marks, androgenic alopecia in men and women and hirsutism of the face and body in women. Serious systemic side effects include jaundice (yellow skin) from liver damage, hepatitis, tumors

of the liver, sexual dysfunction, increased blood pressure and cardiomyopathy. Women can also develop a decrease in breast size and a lower voice, and men can develop enlarged breasts (gynecomastia).

Pregnancy and psoriasis

Q: I have suffered from psoriasis for most of my life and am now five months pregnant and off therapy and have noticed my condition has improved. Is it possible that my improvement is related to my pregnancy?

A: It has been shown that women who have high estrogen levels during pregnancy frequently experience a significant improvement in their psoriasis. Unfortunately, the condition often flares in the postpartum period.

Psoriasis treatment

Q: Can you tell me about Raptiva for psoriasis?

A: Psoriasis is one of the most common conditions dermatologists treat. More than 4.5 million people suffer from psoriasis, with more than 1.5 million suffering from moderate to severe psoriasis.

Topical prescription retinoids, such as Differin, Retin-A and Tazorac are helpful in ameliorating hyperpigmentation in association with acne in patients with dark skin.



Last month the FDA approved Raptiva (Efalizumab) for the treatment of moderate to severe psoriasis. Raptiva is a biologic therapy that is self administered subcutaneously by patients as a once-weekly injection. In studies, patients improved 47 percent at 12 weeks.

Pre-skin cancers

Q: I suffer from sun-damaged skin and have had several courses of treatment with Effudex. The treatment is prolonged and unsightly but very effective. What can you tell me about new laser treatments for pre-skin cancers?

A: New laser treatments utilizing the V-beam laser and short contact ALA topical solution, Levulan Kerastick, are highly effective.

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tive in treating actinic keratoses (pre-skin cancers). Unlike Effudex treatment, this therapy is accomplished in one treatment without a prolonged four-week course of topical therapy. The treatment is well tolerated and also has the advantage of improving overall skin redness.

Skin darkening

Q: What is the best way to improve skin darkening that develops in association with acne?

A: Patients with dark skin are at an increased risk of developing hyperpigmentation in association with acne. Topical prescription retinoids, such as Differin, Retin-A and Tazorac are helpful in ameliorating these skin discolorations.

OTC remedies such as salicylic acid, glycolic acid, retinal, Kinerase and Niadyne are also helpful. Microdermabrasion and superficial chemical peeling can also hasten resolution.

Hair removal

Q: I recently heard that it is possible to develop increased hair growth following laser hair removal. Is this true?

A: Individuals undergoing laser hair removal will rarely develop hair regrowth on or near the treatment area. This phenomenon occurs primarily in individuals of Mediterranean or Italian descent who undergo treatment for fine hair in the upper neck, chin and sideburn area.

Pierced nipples

Q: I heard that piercing the nipples can cause breast cancer. Is that true?

A: There is no evidence that piercing the nipples can cause

breast cancer, but piercing can cause an increased risk of metal allergy and infection. Recipients of piercing are also at risk of hepatitis, tuberculosis and HIV if the needles being used are not sterile. ■

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