

Letter to the editor

Chronic urticaria: from thyroid autoimmunity to *Helicobacter pylori*

Zuberbier (1) in his review article on urticaria, although stating that that he 'considered the published studies until May 2003 through Medline Search', omitted to cite more recent studies on thyroid autoimmunity in chronic urticaria [(including ours (2))] and cited only the historical paper by Leznoff and Sussman, which, though a milestone, dates back to 1989 (3). The reason why we are forwarding our criticism is not that we would have appreciated our study to be cited, but that, in this way, it seems that Leznoff and Sussman's data have not been confirmed as using more sensitive and specific methods to detect thyroid autoantibodies. This decreases the importance of the issue while, on the contrary, the phenomenon has been confirmed by various authors in larger series

and may have a prevalence rate as high as one-third of chronic urticaria cases (2). Less emphasis, in our opinion, should have been put on pseudoallergic reactions, whose role needs further confirmation.

Unfortunately, this is probably the result of a different way of looking at the problem of urticaria: either by the allergist, who has a more internistic approach, or by the dermatologist, who may underestimate the role of internistic conditions.

Furthermore, there is an obvious (editing?) mistake in Table 4, where it reads that 'autologous serum skin test for *Helicobacter*' should possibly be performed in the management of chronic urticaria and, after a comma, gastroscopy is suggested. First, autologous skin test is aimed at detecting serum autoantibodies against Fc-epsilon

receptor and has nothing to do with *Helicobacter*. Secondly, to detect *Helicobacter* infection in a patient with urticaria only and no GI symptoms, gastroscopy is an unnecessary and invasive procedure. Less invasive methods, such as urea-breath test, should probably be recommended instead (4), once the role of this infection in the pathogenesis of urticaria is better defined (for a metanalysis of this topic see 5).

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