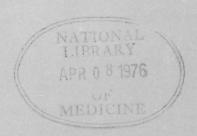


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The inhibiting effect of soft paraffin on the Köbner response in psoriasis

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SUMMARY

White soft paraffin has been shown to inhibit the development of the isomorphic response (Köbner phenomenon) in psoriasis. The possible reasons for this are discussed and it is suggested that this finding has implications which should lead to a greater understanding of the nature of psoriasis.

Despite intense efforts throughout the world the causation of psoriasis remains a baffling problem (Shuster, 1971). Two main facts seem fundamental—that genetic factors play an important role (Watson, Cann & Farber, 1972), and that certain trigger factors may provoke the psoriatic reaction in the individual so constituted. Trigger factors may be systemic, e.g. streptococcal infections (Whyte & Baughman, 1964) or local, such as physical injury. The latter is often called the Köbner or isomorphic response, and is clinically and histologically indistinguishable from spontaneous lesions, apart from its shape, which closely follows the area traumatized. Classically it follows 6-18 days after injury, which may be a scratch, sunburn, abrasion or operation wound. It has been shown that both epidermis and dermis must be damaged before the reaction occurs (Stankler, 1969). Since there is no animal model of psoriasis, the Köbner effect provides the only controllable method currently available for research into this common disorder. Consequently it has been extensively investigated with regard to the type, degree and depth of injury producing it, the time course between stimulus and response and the appearances at the clinical, histological and electron microscopical level. Many chemicals and drugs have been used in attempts to suppress the reaction, without success. It is obvious that if a method were available to prevent or suppress the reaction, it would be of the greatest possible significance, both theoretically and at the clinical level where it might well prove a source of practical techniques in the management of the spontaneous disease.

A positive response indicates active disease, and multiple simultaneous stimuli anywhere on the skin produce an equal number of responses (Pedace, Muller & Winkelmann, 1969). This observation is of great significance and accords well with observations suggesting that psoriasis is latent throughout the whole integument even when only localized plaques are visible clinically.

The following experiments were designed to test the hypothesis that a positive Köbner reaction is due to local overgrowth of bacterial organisms (especially streptococci) at the site of trauma. If this were so it would correlate well with the guttate psoriasis reactions seen after systemic strepotococcal



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