TEWL Measurement Standardization

Sir,
In a paper by van Sam et al. [1] they presented TEWL measurements on three different areas on the forearm studied in one group consisting of 11 subjects where TEWL measurements were performed repeatedly every 5 min for 2 h. In another group consisting of 7 subjects the measurements took places on 3 different days. The aim of the study was to standardize TEWL measurement with the ServoMed equipment.

In the standardization report of the European Society of Contact Dermatitis “Guidelines for Transepidermal Water Loss (TEWL) Measurement”, an extensive review of the literature and the many different aspects and influences related to the equipment, measuring conditions and the subject being studied was given [2]. This guideline has become widely accepted and is a commonly used reference in research papers in this field. Van Sam et al. state in their paper that “a draft (draught?) screen was fixed on the probe to eliminate flux variations due to atmospheric movements”, but the draught screen used is in no way described despite the fact that it may easily influence recordings.

Van Sam et al. state that the volunteers were studied while sitting in a chair with their sleeves rolled up prior to the first measurement, but this was done immediately prior to the first measurement.

No description is given of physical and mental activity immediately before measurement or of other factors which could necessitate preconditioning or influence initial recordings.

Moreover, no details are given about the laboratory room and measuring conditions except information on room temperature and humidity.

Repeated follow-up TEWL measurements were not combined with measurement of skin surface temperature, which might change during the initial period since the subjects’ sleeves were rolled up prior to the first measurement.

The authors only deal with a small segment of the many problems related to TEWL measurement, and it is difficult to accept that they entitle their paper “TEWL Measurement Standardization” based on this piece of information. The paper includes no guide or guideline and the authors briefly conclude that TEWL measurements with the evaporimeter should not include the area near the wrist when measurements are performed on the ventral forearm and the minimal rest time for steady-state values is 15 min.

The guidelines of the European Contact Dermatitis Society state that “Individuals should rest for 15–30 min before TEWL measurements, with the skin at the measuring side left uncovered. Only TEWL values from the same anatomical area are expected to be comparable”. To my belief the authors should conclude that their observations were entirely in accordance with the TEWL guideline already published and recommended readers to adhere to these guidelines, where they can find a detailed evaluation of the pros and cons of the method, ending with practical advice on how to use an evaporimeter.

REFERENCES

Accepted September 13, 1994.

J. Serup, Chairman of the Standardization Group of the European Society of Contact Dermatitis, Associate Professor of Dermatology, University of Copenhagen, head, Department of Dermatological Research, Leo Pharmaceutical Products, Industriparken 55, DK-2750 Ballerup, Denmark.

In response to the letter by J. Serup

I appreciate the comments of J. Serup concerning our paper [1] and I agree with him that the guidelines published by himself, Pinnagoda and coworkers should be adhered to [2]. These guidelines are referenced and mentioned twice in our paper, and we mention that in our study “the experimental conditions were similar to those recommended by Pinnagoda et al.”.

As stated in the introduction of the paper, the aim of our study was only to “confirm the literature data concerning variations due to the cutaneous site and to assess the minimal rest-time required to obtain steady readings of TEWL...”. Since most TEWL studies are carried out on the volar forearm, measurements were performed at 3 different sites in this area: 4, 15 and 20 cm from the wrist. We could demonstrate that values were significantly higher in the wrist region, as recently reported by Panisset et al. [3].

Concerning the minimal rest-time, measurements were performed on 16 subjects (not 7 as stated by Dr Serup) after a previous study of intra-individual variations and reproducibility conducted in 7 subjects extensively tested on 3 different days. Measurements recorded every 5 min for 2 h allowed the establishment of a time-course curve. I am not aware of such a kinetic study of TEWL values in the literature.
Finally, even if (as stated by Dr. Serup) our paper deals with a small segment of TEWL standardization (it was restricted in the title to "kinetic and topographic aspects"), I still believe that it is useful to confirm and precise experimental data concerning TEWL measurements.

REFERENCES

Prof. JJ Guilhou, Head Department of Dermatology-Phlebology and Laboratory of Molecular Dermatology, Montpellier F 34295, France.

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Laser Treatment of Port Wine Stains: A Study Comparing Therapeutic Outcome with Morphologic Characteristics of the Lesions

Preliminary Results

Sir,

Port wine stains and other forms of benign dermal superficial vascular ectasia are now treated with flash lamp-pumped dye lasers. Depending on the morphology of the lesions, there are great variations in clinical response.

Telangiectatic lesions achieve complete resolution after 2 to 4 treatments (1), while port wine stains in general need an average of 6.5 treatments to obtain complete remission (2). This study was designed to obtain information about possible correlations between treatment outcome and lesion morphology.

METHODS

Thirteen patients aged 15 to 52 years (average age 34.2 years), with pink to purple macular port wine stains, were included. Two of the lesions were located on the neck, two on the upper arm and nine on the trunk. Prior to admission of laser light, 3-mm punch biopsies were taken from lesional and peri-lesional skin. The biopsies were analyzed by a data-assisted program (Kontron image analysis systems, Videoplan), measuring vessel number and diameter. A Cynosure LPDL-5 flash lamp-pumped dye laser emitting at a wavelength of 585 nm (yellow light) with a pulse duration of 450 µs was used. Test areas with three different energy fluences (5.25, 6.50, 7.75 J/cm²) were given to each lesion. The energy fluence was calculated from the energies registered on Opht laser energy meter model DGX, energy monitor model F150-APH. The test areas were located close to the site of the biopsy. Two months after laser irradiation the percentage of lightening of the test areas was evaluated by photographs and clinical judgment with Pantone color system as reference. The lesions were grouped into non-responders (less than 25% clearance), moderate responders (25–75% clearance) and excellent responders (more than 75% clearance). The test areas were then retreated 2–4 times with the test dose that gave the highest degree of lightening.

RESULTS

An increased vessel number was observed in the upper 0.5 mm of dermis for all lesions.

Four patients aged 23–52 years (average age 40 years) achieved excellent lightening at one or more of the test areas. The lesions of the excellent responders were red to purple. One was located on the neck, one on the arm and two on the trunk. Histologically (Fig. 1a), these lesions were characterized by

Fig. 1a. Biopsy (HES, original magnification ×20) from an excellent responder.

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Fig. 1b. Biopsy (HES, original magnification ×65) from a non-responder.