

The value of topical corticosteroids in psoriasis, their advantages and drawbacks

J.P.Ortonne

Topical corticosteroids have been introduced in the late fifties and are currently the most widely used topical treatment for chronic psoriasis and other dermatitis. The efficacy of topical corticosteroids in the treatment of psoriasis has been documented both by systematic reviews and randomised controlled clinical investigations, usually not exceeding 4 weeks of treatment, which demonstrates how medium and high potency corticosteroids can ameliorate psoriasis in the short term. This improvement mainly consists in the reduction of erythema and scaling.

Topical corticosteroids administration has the main advantage to limit the effects of therapy to the application site, thus reducing all problems related to systemic absorption. Occlusive medication has been proven to increase the clinical activity of steroids, as it is confirmed by various small RCTs mostly using an intra-patient design, and by the fact that occlusion is a widely accepted procedure to accelerate healing especially in the treatment of recalcitrant forms of psoriasis. Keeping in mind that chronic plaque psoriasis, which is characterised by well localised psoriatic plaques frequently attaining the extensory parts of limbs, is by far the most common form of psoriasis, the therapeutic value of topical corticosteroids is discussed by examining the advantages and the drawbacks of their use in psoriasis treatment.

