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Correspondence

Edited by Stephen P. Stone, MD

Reply to: Introducing special cutaneous “sign” tribute to healthcare workers managing new coronavirus disease (Covid -19)

To the Editor,

Since our initial publication on coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) infection and the skin, the pandemic has evolved with nearly 1,600,000 new cases and more than 93,000 deaths since the beginning of April 2020,¹ with these numbers increasing daily. In China, 3300 health care workers have been infected with the virus, and the number in Italy has escalated to 2600 as of this writing.

Medical personnel at risk

Medical personnel are at high risk for acquiring the infection due to intense exposure, lack of protective equipment, and ineffective prophylaxis. In the memory of those medics who have committed their lives to fighting the pandemic, we propose a new skin sign: “COVID-19 MS sign” (MS stands for medical staff), reflecting those facial cutaneous manifestations due to protective medical devices and personal equipment.² We support this proposal with the clarification that facial skin changes similar to those in health care workers have been reported elsewhere in the population, also created by the extensive use of protective equipment.

Subsequent to our initial publication, specific skin manifestations of the COVID-19 infection have been reported, including maculopapular eruptions, urticaria, and vesicular lesions, along with livedo-like and petechial lesions.^{3,4} We would like to remind the readership that COVID-19 is not detected in skin specimens taken from infected patients.⁵ The structure of the skin and accessories is basically normal, with a sparse lymphocytic infiltrate surrounding the superficial small blood vessels of the dermis.

The direct effect of the virus on the skin is not evident. We attribute our cutaneous observations to hyperergic manifestations and hypersensitivity reactions to the infection.⁶

Conclusions

We underline the role of skin preventive measures, including the use of emollients, barrier creams, and moisturizers, to assist in preventing skin complications aggravated by preventive measures during the pandemic.

Razvigor Darlenski MD, PhD

Department of Dermatology and Venereology, Acibadem

City Clinic, Tokuda Hospital, Sofia, Bulgaria

Department of Dermatology and Venereology, Medical

Faculty, Trakia University, Stara Zagora, Bulgaria

E-mail address: darlenski@bv.bg

Nikolai Tsankov, MD, PhD, DSc

Department of Dermatology and Venereology, Acibadem


City Clinic, Tokuda Hospital, Sofia, Bulgaria

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