Frosch' surface microscopy score for the assessment of steroid-induced atrophy

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Editor,

We have read with great interest the paper by Hofmann et al. [3] regarding the validation of Dermaphot® for the assessment of steroid-induced skin atrophy. The authors stated in this article that “the aim of the study was to use this new assessment technique to establish and validate a new score for skin atrophy and telangiectasia”. Although it is an interesting study, we would like to consider some objections.

First, the authors claim to have validated a “new” Dermaphot® score to assess the atrophogenic potential of topical glucocorticosteroids. This is a surprising conclusion since this “new” Dermaphot® score is strikingly similar to the classic Frosch scoring system for corticosteroid atrophy, where visible atrophy (transparency) and telangiectasia were rated under a stereomicroscope on a histologically validated five-point scale [2]. When both scores are compared, considerable resemblance becomes evident, and also the same terminology and descriptive terms are shared. Consequently, it does not seem too appropriate to describe the Dermaphot® score as “new”.

Second, the use of the instrument applied to detect atrophy (Dermaphot®, a contact dermatoscopic photographic system) should not be considered a novelty either, as the authors also state. Frosch et al. used the stereomicroscope (an expensive device not generally available) for scoring steroid-induced atrophy but, in fact, the lower cost Dermaphot® has been used and described previously for

the same purpose in several reports [1, 4–6]. Moreover, it should also be noted that all of them used the already mentioned classic Frosch score to detect the steroid-induced skin atrophy. Therefore, in our opinion, it seems better to keep the term Frosch score or surface microscopy score instead of the proposed “new” Dermaphot scoring method.

Conflict of interest The authors have no conflicts of interest.

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