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Hives: The Road to Diagnosis and Treatment of Urticaria

Alan A. Wanderer

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It is estimated that one out of five persons in the United States experiences at least one episode of hives in their lifetime. That is approximately sixty million people in the U.S., almost twice the population of California. Even if the actual number is over-estimated by fifty percent because of inaccurate diagnosis, thirty million remains an impressive number. Approximately five to ten percent of these patients may experience symptoms from six weeks up to two years or longer. This suggests that 1.5 to 3 million individuals in the U.S experience chronic hives.

There is a paucity of materials to assist health care professionals (HCP) and patients on these conditions.There is in fact no existing publication, past or present, that provides the practical approach discussed in this book for the evaluation and treatment of these conditions. The book will appeal to patients who are desirous of a self-help approach and to HCPs who need time-saving guidance to organize and standardize the evaluation of these conditions.

Many of the common questions that are asked by patients are answered in this book. It is our experience that addressing the following questions allays anxiety that patients experience and will improve their understanding as to why their symptoms are sometimes not diagnosed or brought under control.
•What are urticaria and angioedema?
•Why is it difficult to find the cause of urticaria and/or angioedema?
•Is there a common mechanism that causes urticaria and/or angioedema?
•Why do urticaria and/or angioedema remain only for a short time in some individuals, while other patients experience symptoms for longer periods, sometimes months or years?
•Can the duration of symptoms be predicted for chronic urticaria and/or angioedema?
•Why aren’t antihistamines completely effective in treating urticaria and/or angioedema?
•How can you determine whether a food, food additives, dyes, preservatives, or undetected allergens are causing urticaria and/or angioedema?
•Do psychological factors play a role in causing urticaria and/or angioedema?

This book is very different than existing medical textbooks as it distills the information from a variety of scientific sources to a level that is understandable for patients and for health care professionals, who may not be familiar with these complex conditions.

This book provides time saving tools to gather information efficiently from patients. Key sections may be reproduced for use with multiple patients. The book organizes and standardizes the evaluation and treatment process and encourages a cooperative approach between HCPs and patients that improves outcomes. It can be used by:

•Health care professionals (HCPs) who can advise their patients to complete a workbook section. Based upon the workbook information, the HCPs can utilize a numeric algorithm to guide them to discussion(s) of possible diagnostic possibilities, laboratory test considerations and treatment recommendations. •Patients, who believe they have hives or swelling, can complete the workbook section. This is shared with the health care professional, who can use the information to consider diagnostic possibilities, laboratory considerations and treatment recommendations.

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