Use of anticoagulants and antithrombotics in dermatology

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The cutaneous vascular network is the area into which the arterial circulatory flow spreads and is the origin of the return venous circulatory flow. In addition, the skin possesses its own vascular network which makes it the predominant domain for microcirculation. Thus, in patients with skin diseases one meets the consequences of disorders of the systemic circulation and also specific disorders of the cutaneous circulation itself.

A patient suffering from a dermatological complaint is also often found to be suffering from another disorder requiring treatment which we shall call non-specific and which one can find in any other branch. The dermatologist is thus confronted with non-dermatological indications for use of anticoagulants and true dermatological indications.

1. Non-specific indications

Concern the classic use of anticoagulants such as in the prevention of thromboembolic events or in the treatment of a general cardiovascular disorder and is usually only a continuation of a course of treatment prescribed by another specialist.
2. As to actual cutaneous disorders we shall look at various uses of anticoagulant treatments

2.1 The Kasabach-Merrit syndrome or thrombopenia-hemangioma syndrome is one case where conventional hematological treatment is required

Here we have a complication occurring in infants or small children where large angioma suddenly present signs of inflammation and take on an ecchymotic and distended aspect evoking thrombosis. The platelet count shows a thrombopenia of around 30,000 platelets. There is a phenomenon of sequestration, activation and platelet consumption occurring inside the vascular malformation. In capillaro-venous malformations, phenomena of disseminated intravascular coagulation syndrome can occur locally with evocative biological signs and require urgent heparinotherapy whereas this is not usually the case with hemangiomas. This infrequent disorder aside, indications requiring the use of anticoagulants or antithrombotics essentially consist of disorders of microcirculation.

2.2 Cutaneous microcirculation disorders

Non-fractioned heparin has been used for a long time, especially for its anti-inflammatory and healing properties, but since treatment was constrictive it was, and remains, little used.

There are almost no indications for Antivitamin K.

Low Molecular Weight Heparins constitute an interesting but recent acquisition and we will developed this aspect farther on in the article.

There will most certainly be indications for the use of fibrinolytics, especially the new preparations which are easier to handle and carry fewer risks, but their use has still to be codified [3].