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Thesis Evaluation Report

Thesis title: **Current scenario of dermatophytosis in India**

Ph. D. Scholar: **Shyam B. Verma**

Research Supervisor: **Prof. Jacek Szepietowski**

Comments:

Despite a huge progress in the development of clinical medicine we have been faced over the last century, infectious diseases still constitute a major health problem as clearly and painfully showed SARS-CoV-2 pandemic. A single virus species was able to stop and blockade a number of our activities throughout the world. Having in mind the meaningfulness of infectious diseases, I have welcomed the PhD Thesis by Dr. Shyam Verma about dermatophytoses with a great pleasure. Despite fungal skin infections are only occasionally life threatening, they are widely distributed, are still one of the most common infectious skin diseases and constitute significant clinical problem. Thus, the topic chosen by Dr. Shyam Verma is interesting, covers underestimated research area and has great clinical significance.

The PhD Thesis consists of one review paper and two original articles, all published in peer reviewed journals listed by the Clarivate Analytics. The review paper, entitled "The great Indian epidemic of superficial dermatophytosis: an appraisal" has been published in the *Indian Journal of Dermatology*. In this report the authors (Dr. Shyam Verma and Dr. Rengarajan Madhu) covered a broad spectrum of aspects of cutaneous superficial tinea in India, including changing clinical pattern of tinea corporis and tinea cruris, the problem of freely available fixed drug combinations containing a steroid, antifungal and antibacterial, and the problem of current drug control policies of the government. They finish their review with several recommendations to improve the patient care and cure and to combat the contemporary epidemic of fungal skin infections in India. Based on his many years of



experience in the treatment of skin diseases, Dr. Shyam Verma in his review underlines increased prevalence of tinea corporis and tinea cruris in India over the last years also indicating the changing clinical presentations of dermatophytoses with more recurrent, chronic cases, as well as individuals with larger sized and greater number of lesions. He also points out the more common tinea cases in children as well as an occurrence of erythroderma in immunocompetent individuals due to fungal skin infections. The authors believe that, at least in part, it is a results of freely available topical fixed drug combinations containing potent steroids that are erroneously used by many people to treat various undiagnosed skin problems, frequently resulting in tinea incognito when applied to fungal skin infections. Another problem may be increasing resistance of fungi to used drugs. The authors strongly argue to limit the number of freely available topical corticosteroids on the market. They also underlined the need of performing large-scale systematic study proving the association of topical steroids and occurrence of chronic widespread dermatophytosis. The review is a good introduction to the original research projects performed by Dr. Shyam Verma among patients with tinea.

The first original paper has been published in the *Journal of the European Academy of Dermatology and Venereology* and focuses on the prevalence and clinical characteristics of itch in dermatophytoses. It has to be underlined, that this is the first study on itch prevalence in fungal skin infections ever published in the literature. Dr. Shyam Verma analyzing 99 patients with tinea found that almost all individuals reported itch during the course of fungal skin infection, usually of moderate to high intensity. Many patients suffered from sleeping problems due to itch resulting in difficulties in falling asleep or frequent sleep awakenings. Despite such suffering, itch is still an underestimated problem in tinea, but thanks to Dr. Shyam Verma's work we may have a hope for changing of clinical habits and for better suited and patient-oriented treatment.

Following the study on itch, Dr. Shyam Verma analyzed the influence of superficial dermatophytoses on quality of life in patients from India. He included 100 patients suffering from superficial fungal skin infections. His results have been published in the *Advances of Dermatology and Allergology*. He found that tinea may significantly impair the quality of life



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of patients and women are generally more affected than men. Importantly, the intensity of pruritus was one of the major parameters significantly influencing the reported quality of life level, again underlying the clinical significance of this subjective sensation in this group of patients.

Summarizing, based on the reviewed Thesis aiming to analyze prevalence and clinical characteristics of itch and quality of life impairment in patients with dermatophytoses, I would like to fully recommend Mr. Shyam Verma to be awarded with the Doctor Degree by the Medical University in Wrocław. In all papers it is clearly seen, that Dr. Shyam Verma is well versed in the studied subject, focuses on the actual and poorly investigated areas of clinical medicine and is able to critically review the scientific literature and his results drawing sound conclusions. The Thesis of Mr. Shyam Verma fulfills all requirements for the Doctor Degree as defined by the Polish law from March 14th, 2003 with subsequent modifications (Dz. U. nr. 65, poz. 595). Mr. Shyma Verma should be allowed to participate in further steps of doctoral dissertation. I would also recommend to reward his Thesis by the Faculty for his novelty and significance.

Sincerely yours,

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