Demography, Symptomatology, and Course of Disease in Ambulatory Zoster Patients

Summary
This survey summarises the observations of physicians who prospectively recorded clinically relevant data on their patients with an episode of herpes zoster. These included demography of patients, signs and symptoms during the prodromal phase, relevant history, description of disease at the first visit, therapeutic measures and description of disease, and occurrence of postherpetic neuralgia (pain 4–5 weeks after crusting) at the second visit. A total of 2,063 patients were reported to the data management centre. The age distribution resembles that reported in the literature including the notable increase in zoster frequency with advancing age. Almost 20% of the patients, however, were 30 years old or less, and this contrasts markedly with the published literature. Age modifies the frequency of the dermatome afflicted: more cranial and less thoracic manifestations were observed with increasing age. Almost all patients reported symptoms which may be attributed to a prodromal phase, especially pain in the affected dermatome (82%). The incidence of postherpetic neuralgia was 28%. A complicated disease course such as visceral, ocular, or otological involvement, or progression to additional dermatomes was seen in almost 10% of the patients.