Editor’s message

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In this issue, we have attempted to discuss a variety of features of urticaria, which occurs in up to 20% of individuals. A common form of urticaria is cold-induced urticaria. It is a concern in the summer months in that swimming in cold water can be extremely dangerous to those susceptible. The first article nicely sums up the presentation, differential diagnosis, and treatment of cold-induced urticaria. It is important to emphasize to all patients with this form of urticaria that they carry with them self-administered injectable epinephrine and they never swim alone.

The next article discusses allergy skin testing in rural areas. The data are important because most of the information about allergies comes from large-city–based universities. The study looked at allergy-test records of patients attending a variety of allergy clinics in rural Pennsylvania to determine differences in sensitivities between people with allergies in rural communities and those in city communities. The findings should help in diagnosis and treatment of allergic disease.

The third article discusses sinusitis in the pediatric population. The case described represents the extreme complication that may occur from sinusitis. It is important when reading this case to appreciate that severe sequelae such as meningitis are extremely unusual secondary to sinusitis and there is some question as to whether early intervention would really be effective at decreasing such a complication. In fact, some recent evidence from *Lancet* (1997;349:683-687) suggests that the treatment of acute sinusitis can lead to more complications and even more chronic sinusitis than allowing the sinusitis to clear naturally. At present, aggressive treatment probably is warranted not only with antibiotics but also with hypertonic saline lavage and probably also nasal steroids. I would not be surprised if in the next 5 years that we find antibiotic treatment is not a necessary component; however, there are still not enough data available to make this assumption.

The final article also deals with a rural community. It attempts to identify patients with asthma who have repetitive hospitalizations in a rural university hospital. To the surprise of the authors, Hispanics were an unusually large portion of those patients with repeated admissions. This finding suggests that even in communities where the Hispanic population is low, it is important to provide bilingual education to enhance compliance and adherence to therapy and decrease the morbidity and mortality associated with asthma.

I hope you find this supplement to be beneficial to your practice. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to e-mail me at tcraig@psu.edu.