Principles of skin care in the elderly

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With aging, skin undergoes progressive structural and functional degeneration that leaves it prone to a wide variety of bothersome and even serious conditions and diseases. As skin conditions and diseases may affect all ages from cradle to grave, a disproportionate burden will clearly fall on the elderly and may significantly impact on quality of life (QoL). With a reduced ability of the skin to regenerate, the elderly are at an increased risk of skin breakdowns from even the simplest insults. It is therefore vital that skin care in the late adulthood is seen as a priority among both clinicians and caregivers. The scientific literature on diagnosing and assessing age-related skin conditions and diseases is vast; however, when it comes to preventive care and treatment, the scientific data available is less profound, and the recommendations are often based on personal experience, opinions or at best on consensus documents rather than on scientific data retrieved from controlled clinical trials. In addition to the absence of the scientific data, the imprecise terminology to describe the topical products, as well as the lack of understanding the essence of the vehicle, contributes to vague and often unhelpfully product recommendations. This paper aims to elucidate some basic principles of skincare, the choice of skincare products and their regulatory status. The paper discusses adherence to topical therapies, percutaneous absorption in the elderly, and skin surface pH and skin care. Lastly, it also discusses skin care principles in selected age related skin conditions and diseases.

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