

The Vulva

A Practical Handbook for Clinicians

Second edition

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Contents

Foreword
by Lynette J. Margesson vii
Preface ix
Glossary x

1 **The Basics** 1
2 **Using Topical Corticosteroids
on the Vulva** 13
3 **Red Vulval Rashes** 16
4 **Things That Look White** 37
5 **Things That Ulcerate, Blister
and Erode** 57
6 **Persistent Vaginitis** 79

7 **Lumps – Normal, Benign and
Malignant** 85
8 **Vulval Pain and Dyspareunia** 113
9 **Vulval Disease in Children** 132
10 **Myths and Pearls** 149

Index 163

Foreword

This is the best comprehensive – yet concise – book on the recognition and management of vulvar diseases that I know: an excellent choice for gynaecologists, dermatologists and family practitioners. It is a practical text for the management of conditions that can at times be very complex and challenging.

Vulvar diseases are not a priority in the education of physicians and caregivers for women nor in any of the ‘women’s health initiatives’. These conditions are generally ignored in medical education at all levels. Women themselves generally have no genital education because they and their caregivers are educated under the prevailing cultural taboos. The result is that vulvar teaching is usually overlooked, so vulvar diseases are perceived as difficult to diagnose and treat.

This book is succinct, well organised and covers the basic aspects of the vulva with excellent diagrams. It is written in a simple format using point form that is easy to follow. Each chapter covers the clinical presentation, misconceptions and common questions for each condition. Each condition is addressed in a concise and helpful manner. Full-colour clinical photographs and illustrations demonstrate the clinical appearance of a wide spectrum of vulvar dermatoses and lesions. Excellent lists simplify management.

Co-written by a dermatologist and gynaecologist – both experienced clinicians and researchers specialising in vulvar conditions – the handbook provides a unique visual and written guide to the causes, diagnosis, treatment and management of both acute and chronic vulvar conditions. With its unique and practical ‘how-to’ approach, this comprehensive handbook is a must-have for health professionals learning to care for the most avoided and under-taught area in women’s health.

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Preface

The first edition of this book appeared in 2010, at a time when there was very little published evidence on vulval disease. Happily, the situation has improved, and the entire text has been amended to reflect this. Further reading lists are included at the end of the chapters. In the last 5 years, the authors themselves have completed important research on genital candidiasis, lichen planus, lichen sclerosus and persistent vaginitis. They have included a précis of this information, as well as relevant research from other centres.

Without accurate diagnosis, there can be no effective treatment. Even today, vulval problems are too often ignored or mismanaged. Our aim is to demystify vulval disease and explain how accurate diagnosis and effective treatment is not only possible but within the reach of clinicians everywhere.

Glossary

- Acanthosis nigricans** – a velvety eruption, sometimes with wart-like growths, accompanied by hyperpigmentation in the skin of the armpits, neck, anogenital area and groin
- Alopecia areata** – an autoimmune condition that causes hair loss with round bald patches, which can evolve to complete baldness
- Amoebiasis** – a tropical infection with *Entamoeba histolytica*, most commonly causing gastroenteritis
- Angiokeratoma** – harmless raised, purple lesions composed of blood vessels with a hyperkeratotic surface, often found on the labia majora
- Apareunia** – inability to perform coitus because of a physical or psychological sexual dysfunction
- Aphthae** – small, shallow, painful ulcers that usually affect the oral mucosa but less commonly affect the vulva
- Atopy** – a common genetic condition characterised by asthma, hay fever and dermatitis, as well as, in some patients, exaggerated IgE responses
- Autoimmune thyroiditis** – an inflammatory disease of the thyroid associated with high levels of thyroid autoantibodies
- Bleb** – a blister filled with fluid (see also Vesicle)
- Campbell de Morgan spots** – red papules on the skin containing a proliferation of blood vessels very commonly found in middle-aged people
- Candidiasis** – fungal infection caused by *Candida* species, most often *C. albicans*
- Cellulitis** – a bacterial skin infection characterised by spreading painful erythema, most often due to group A *Streptococcus*
- Chancroid** – sexually transmissible tropical infection caused by *Haemophilus ducreyi* and characterised by genital ulcers
- Comedones** – also known as blackheads: papules with a dark centre caused by a build-up of sebaceous material in hair follicles
- Crohn's disease** – an inflammatory disease that may affect any part of the gastrointestinal tract from mouth to anus, which causes a wide variety of symptoms
- Cytokines** – immunoregulatory chemicals
- Dermoscopy** – a technique for examining skin lesions using a hand-held magnifying device
- Desquamation** – shedding of the outer layers of the skin
- Desquamative inflammatory vulvovaginitis** – an uncommon chronic non-infective vulvovaginitis characterised by an introital and vaginal rash, soreness, dyspareunia and discharge
- Dowling–Degos disease** – a rare disease causing reticulated hyperpigmentation of the vulval and axillary skin
- Dyspareunia** – painful sexual intercourse
- Erythema** – redness of the skin
- Folliculitis** – inflammation or infection of one or more hair follicles characterised by a pustular eruption
- Fomite** – any inanimate object or substance capable of carrying infectious organisms
- Fourchette** – a small fold of membrane connecting the labia minora in the posterior part of the vulva
- Fox–Fordyce disease** – a rare skin disorder characterised by the development of itchy bumps around the hair follicles of the underarm area, pubic region, and/or around the nipples
- Hamartoma** – a neoplasm resulting from overgrowth of normal tissue
- Hidradenitis suppurativa** – a severe, chronic recurrent condition of the apocrine sweat glands characterised by nodules, pustules and sinuses
- Hyperalgesia** – pain or discomfort from light touch, intolerance of tight clothes
- Inguinal** – pertaining to the groin
- Intertriginous** – where two skin areas touch or rub together
- Koebner phenomenon** – refers to skin lesions appearing in areas of chronic trauma
- Leishmaniasis** – a skin disease characterised by ulcers and nodules caused by protozoan parasites of the genus *Leishmania* transmitted by sandfly bite
- Lichenification** – thickening of the surface of the skin caused by scratching
- Lymphogranuloma venereum** – a sexually transmissible disease caused by *Chlamydia trachomatis* causing genital abscesses and ulcers

Glossary

Maceration – softening and whitening of skin due to chronic wetness

Macule – a change in skin colour without elevation or depression

Marsupialisation – cutting off the top of a cyst and suturing the cyst edges of the skin

Molluscum contagiosum – a viral skin disease characterised by small umbilicated papules

Morphoea – a condition in which there are areas of skin fibrosis similar to a scar

Mucosal petechiae – red–purple lesions of the skin or mucosa due to extravasation of blood from capillaries

Naevi – birthmarks or coloured skin markings

Neurofibromatosis – a genetic disease in which patients develop multiple soft tumours (neurofibromas) under the skin and throughout the nervous system associated with pigmented skin lesions

Non-sexual acute genital ulceration (NSAGU) – aphthous ulceration of the vulva (see Aphthae)

Papilloma – a benign pedunculated tumour

Papillomatous – raised and rough, similar to a wart

Papules – firm raised lesions on the skin

Pedunculated – growing or attaching to a peduncle or stalk

Pernicious anaemia – anaemia due to vitamin B12 deficiency

Pruritus – itch

Punctum – the opening of a sebaceous cyst

Rugose – wrinkled or ridged

Sebaceous adenitis – recurrent inflammation of the sebaceous glands of the labia minora

Sebaceous hyperplasia – a common harmless enlargement of the skin oil glands, which features skin-coloured to yellow-white elevations of the skin

Seborrhoeic keratoses – harmless skin lesions occurring in adulthood also known as ‘age warts’

Spongiosis – a histopathological term meaning intercellular oedema between keratinocytes, or cells found in the epidermis

Stenosed – narrowed

Striae – stretchmarks

Syringomas – harmless sweat duct tumours

Telangiectasia – small, superficial, dilated blood vessels

Tuberous sclerosis – rare, multisystem genetic disease characterised by skin lesions and internal tumours

Umbilicated – marked by depressed spots resembling the umbilicus

Vesicle – a fluid-filled sac within the epidermis

Violaceous – of a violet colour

Vitiligo – an autoimmune disease characterised by loss of skin pigment

Vulvovaginitis – inflammation of the vagina and vulva