Topical Imiquimod Clears Infantile Hemangioma

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Montreal — Topical imiquimod 5% cream can dramatically reduce or resolve some infantile hemangiomas and could be a treatment option as early as the newborn phase, Dr. Marc Bourcier said at Dermatology Update 2007.

This early, noninvasive treatment has minimal side effects and is a welcome option for parents whose other alternatives have been shown to carry a number of risks and complications.

In addition, there was also one treatment failure, one treatment interruption, and one patient lost to follow-up, said Dr. Bourcier.

“Imiquimod therapy has not been without effect: a complete resolution was seen in 20% of patients, and an incomplete resolution with no adverse effects or withdrawal was noted in 30%,” he said.

Dr. Bourcier said he believes that, even without effecting a complete resolution, topical imiquimod can slow progression of hemangiomas enough to obviate extensive surgery later, if surgery is needed.

He added, however, that superficial lesions are more likely to respond, compared with deeper ones.

“There are some case reports in the literature of improvement in the deeper lesions, but it is felt that the superficial ones are best suited to topical therapy—and these are the ones that show the most because they are such a bright, fiery red,” he said in an interview.

“Hidden lesions are not such a concern, but for facial ones I strongly believe you have to do something before the children get to school, when they start to really socialize and become more self-conscious,” he said.

Dr. Bourcier speaks from personal experience: His daughter, now aged 12 years, was born with a facial hemangioma.

He chose surgical therapy for her when she was 4 years old, with excellent results.

“Imiquimod therapy had not been prescribed for this back then, but if it had, I would surely have chosen it,” he commented.