Cicatricial Pattern Hair Loss

In pattern hair loss the genetically predisposed hair follicles are susceptible to androgen-stimulated hair follicle miniaturization. The limited success rate of treatment with minoxidil and finasteride means that further pathogenic pathways must be taken into account. The implication of a microscopic follicular inflammation has emerged from several studies, and the term *follicular microinflammation* has been proposed, since the process involves a slow, subtle, and indolent course, in contrast to the inflammatory, destructive process in the scarring alopecias. There seems to exist a continuum of inflammatory phenomena and fibrosis in pattern hair loss that extends from *follicular microinflammation over frontal fibrosing alopecia to fibrosing alopecia in a pattern distribution*. An important question is how the inflammation is generated. Inflammation is a multistep process with the question arising with regard to the primary event. Remarkably, in healthy murine skin, clusters of perifollicular macrophages have been described as perhaps indicating the existence of a physiological program of immunologically controlled hair follicle deletion by which malfunctioning follicles are removed. It has been proposed that some forms of clinically perceptible scarring alopecias may represent a pathological exaggeration of this phenomenon. Besides androgens, additional pathogenic factors are suspected, such as microbial flora, environmental stress, and microinflammation. Finally, we may also learn by analogy from the cicatrical alopecias. So far, the inflammatory component has not been included in treatment protocols of pattern hair loss, though morphometric studies have demonstrated that with follicular inflammation and fibrosis therapeutic response to minoxidil is decreased. Surprisingly, the use or addition of topical corticosteroids or of systemic anti-inflammatory agents such as hydroxychloroquine or doxycycline has so far not been systematically studied. For now, we can only deduce a putative added benefit by analogy from their use in central centrifugal cicatricial alopecia.