An Interdisciplinary Consensus on Managing Skin Reactions Associated With Human Epidermal Growth Factor Receptor Inhibitors

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The use of human epidermal growth factor receptor (HER1/EGFR) inhibitors, such as erlotinib, cetuximab, and panitumumab, often is accompanied by the development of a characteristic spectrum of skin toxicities. Although these toxicities rarely are life threatening, they can cause physical and emotional distress for patients and caregivers. As a result, practitioners often withdraw the drug, potentially depriving patients of a beneficial clinical outcome. These reactions do not necessarily require any alteration in HER1/EGFR-inhibitor treatment and often are best addressed through symptomatic treatment. Although the evidence for using such therapies is limited, an interdisciplinary HER1/EGFR-inhibitor dermatologic toxicity forum was held in October 2006 to discuss the underlying mechanisms of these toxicities and evaluate commonly used therapeutic interventions. The result was a proposal for a simple, three-tiered grading system for skin toxicities related to HER1/EGFR inhibitors to be used in therapeutic decision making and as a framework for building a stepwise approach to intervention.

At a Glance

- The use of human epidermal growth factor receptor (HER1/EGFR) inhibitors often is accompanied by the development of a characteristic class-specific spectrum of skin toxicities.
- Skin toxicities related to HER1/EGFR inhibitors do not necessarily require alteration in HER1/EGFR-inhibitor treatment and often are addressed best through symptomatic management.
- Evidence-based treatment recommendations for skin toxicities related to HER1/EGFR inhibitors are not available because no data from controlled clinical studies have been published.

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Human Epidermal Growth Factor Receptor–Targeted Therapies

As a result of an increased understanding of the underlying molecular causes of cancer, biologic targeted agents have