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Urticaria is one of the most common diseases in dermatology and allergy. Unlike many other diseases, the fleeting nature of the wheals makes first diagnosis by both patients and physicians in many cases easy. However, this only refers to the ordinary wheals. The disease itself is highly complex in nature, with variety of clinical manifestations ranging from pinpoint-sized wheals to extensive angiodema. Complexity is also seen in the diversity of possible eliciting factors, the many different clinical subtypes and the therapeutic responsiveness.

Only in recent years has a better understanding of the diversity in the different subtypes led to new classifications and new evidence-based guidelines for diagnostics and management of the disease. While mast cells are in the center of most urticaria reactions, it is now clearly understood that the responsible mediators are not only limited to histamines.

The current book appears in a series of books by Springer. In 1986, the first monograph was edited by Professor Henz née Chanewsky. Since then, two updates of the book have appeared in the German language with Professor Henz as first editor and T. Zuberbier, J. Grabbe, and E. Monroe as the co-editors of the most recent English version, published in 1998. All these books have been written as a joint effort of Professor Henz together with her team at the Department of Dermatology at the Virchow Clinic, Humboldt University, Berlin.

With the retirement of Professor Henz from her chair as head of the department of dermatology and novel guidelines available, the current group of editors has taken up the task of developing a completely new setup for the book. A group of internationally known authors in the field of urticaria have been asked to write different chapters, focusing on practical guidelines regarding diagnosis and therapy.

This book is designed to be a useful reference for dermatologists, allergologists, pediatricians, and practitioners in general medicine, laying out clear-cut standard operating procedures on how to manage this disease efficiently.

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