Evaluation of the Barrier Function of the Stratum Corneum with a Portable Device Based on a Closed Chamber System for Measuring Transepidermal Water Loss

Hachiro TAGAMI,* Katsuko KIKUCHI,* Hiromi KOBAYASHI*

Abstract

Transepidermal water loss (TEWL) provides us accurate in vivo information about the integrity of the barrier function of the stratum corneum (SC). The largest drawback for using the conventional instruments is their high cost. Moreover, it is also required to conduct measurements in a special environment where there is no air turbulence because so far available instruments are based on an open chamber system that measures the water vapor pressure gradient produced above the skin surface by the vapor passing through the SC barrier. Recently, we have had a chance to test a newly devised portable equipment (Model H 4300-S; NIKKISO-YSI CO., LTD., Tokyo, Japan) with a closed chamber system whose measuring principle is based on a computed TEWL estimation from a time-wise increase in relative humidity in the space of the probe that is applied on the skin surface. We conducted an in vivo comparative study by using the new portable device and the conventional method using the DermaLab® (Cortex Technology, Hadsund, Denmark) in healthy individuals and dermatological patients. We found that the sensitivity of the new device was not inferior to the conventional one because it could detect the poor SC barrier function of normal facial skin as compared to the skin of the extremities. Moreover, barrier disruption that is present in the lesions of skin of AD or psoriasis was demonstrable in a severity-dependent fashion. Only one difference from the conventional one is that the obtained values measured with this new device were lower than those obtained with the DermaLab®, probably due to the difference in the methodological principles. It was also unable to measure TEWL at the sites with measured values less than 1 g/sq-m/h. However, there was a good correlation between the data obtained with different methods ($p<0.001$). The biggest advantage to use the closed system is that, because water evaporation from the skin takes place in any position, we can perform TEWL measurements without paying attention to the position of the skin surface in contrast to the conventional open system that requires the position of the skin surface to be horizontal. Thus, we can conclude that the closed chamber system is much more practical than the conventional open cylinder system. It can be carried easily to any place and enables us to conduct TEWL measurements without requiring any special environment preventive against air turbulence in addition to its cheaper price.

Key words: barrier function, portable instrument, transepidermal water loss.

1. はじめに

私たちが生きてゆくためには生体組織に水の存在が必須である。体表を形成する臓器である皮膚自身、その70％は水分からなっている。すなわち、水に満た

* 東北大学大学院医学系研究科内科学講座皮膚科学分野 〒980-8574 仙台市青葉区星陵町1-1

* Department of Dermatology, Tohoku University, Graduate School of Medicine (1-1, Seiryo-machi, Aoba-ku, Sendai 980-8574, Japan)