

an estimate of the concentration of the drug can be made by solubilising part of the SSB and “counting” the resulting fluid in a scintillation counter. The same area of SSB is assessed from each SSB so that comparisons can be made. Other analytic techniques can be employed including radioimmune assay. SSBs are taken at increasing depths right through the SC at different times in adjoining sites. It is thus possible to build a profile of the concentrations throughout the SC at various time points.

We have investigated the penetration of many drugs in this way, including corticosteroids, antifungal imidazoles and nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory reagents.

### Comedogenicity Assay

Some topical agents irritate follicular canals and cause comedones and even acne. By taking SSBs from areas that have had a topical preparation applied over a 4 week period and determining the presence of horny comedonal plugs in these specimens it is possible to categorise the comedogenicity of the substance applied.

### DNA Analysis

A recent adaptation of the SSB technique has been to characterise the DNA present. Although it was possible to identify native DNA in SSBs from normal skin after polymerase chain reaction (PCR) very much more was as might be expected in SSBs from psoriatic skin.<sup>9</sup>

The ability to look at human DNA using a “non invasive” technique opens up a multitude of investigative possibilities and we look forward to seeing how this particular application develops.

### References

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