University of Banja Luka
Faculty of Medicine

DERMATOVENEROLOGY

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Why Do We Have This Course?

"Why is dermatology so important compared with all other fields of medicine?"

At first glance, the skin is an organ that is easily accessible for examination, and it may seem that diagnosing skin diseases should be straightforward. However, once you become familiar with the broad spectrum of dermatological and venereal diseases, their diverse clinical manifestations, and the fact that numerous systemic diseases may first manifest on the skin, it becomes clear that dermatovenereology represents an important part of modern medicine.

The skin is the largest organ of the human body and performs numerous functions, including protective, immunological, sensory, thermoregulatory, and metabolic functions. Skin changes may result from a local disorder, but they may also be manifestations of diseases of internal organs or of immunological, infectious, endocrine, metabolic, or malignant processes.

The purpose of this course is to introduce you, in a systematic and clinically oriented manner, to the **most important diseases of the skin, mucous membranes, hair, and nails**, as well as to **sexually transmitted infections and diseases**. The aim is not simply to memorize a large number of diagnoses, but to learn **how to approach a patient with skin lesions, take a relevant medical**

history, perform a proper dermatological examination, recognize primary and secondary morphological lesions, and correlate the clinical presentation with a possible diagnosis.

Particular emphasis is placed on developing **clinical reasoning skills**. In dermatology, the appearance of a lesion often provides an important diagnostic clue. However, an accurate diagnosis requires integrating morphology, location, distribution of lesions, the course of the disease, subjective symptoms, and information obtained from the patient's medical history.

Throughout this course, you will therefore learn to **observe, describe, differentiate, and integrate**. You will learn to recognize when a particular skin lesion is harmless, when it requires further diagnostic evaluation, and when it represents an emergency or a sign of a serious systemic disease.

At the same time, dermatovenereology will help you develop one of the most important clinical skills: the ability to use careful examination and appropriately obtained clinical information to **formulate a differential diagnosis and make a rational decision about further diagnostic and therapeutic management**.

How Is This Course Related to Other Courses in the Medical Curriculum?

Dermatovenereology is a highly interdisciplinary field of medicine. The knowledge you have acquired in previous courses will now be applied in a specific clinical context.

Knowledge of **anatomy and histology** of the skin provides the foundation for understanding its structure and function, as well as the development of various pathological changes.

Knowledge of **pathophysiology and pathology** enables you to understand the mechanisms underlying inflammatory, infectious, autoimmune, degenerative, and neoplastic skin diseases.

Dermatovenereology is particularly closely related to **microbiology and infectious diseases** through bacterial, viral, fungal, and parasitic skin infections, as well as sexually transmitted infections.

Knowledge of **immunology** is essential for understanding conditions such as atopic dermatitis, psoriasis, autoimmune connective tissue diseases, and numerous other immune-mediated dermatoses.

The connection with **pharmacology** is reflected in the use of topical and systemic therapies and in understanding the mechanisms of drug action, their adverse effects, and potential drug interactions.

Dermatovenereology is also closely related to **internal medicine, pediatrics, neurology, endocrinology, rheumatology, oncology, infectious diseases, and other clinical disciplines**, as cutaneous manifestations are often part of the clinical presentation of systemic diseases.

The relationship with **surgery and oncology** is particularly important in the diagnosis and treatment of skin tumors, as is the relationship with plastic and reconstructive surgery in the management of certain skin defects and malignant tumors.

In this way, dermatovenereology provides an opportunity to **integrate knowledge acquired across multiple previously completed courses and apply it directly in clinical practice with patients**.

What Will We Know After Successfully Completing This Course?

Upon successful completion of the course, the student is expected to be able to:

- explain the structure, functions, and basic physiological characteristics of the skin and its appendages;
- take an appropriate dermatovenereological history;
- perform a basic dermatological examination;
- recognize and accurately describe primary and secondary skin lesions;
- assess the location, distribution, shape, size, color, and other characteristics of skin lesions;
- demonstrate knowledge of the most important diagnostic procedures used in dermatovenereology;
- understand the principles of topical and systemic treatment of dermatological diseases;
- accurately communicate dermatological findings using appropriate medical terminology;
- differentiate between the most important dermatological syndromes and clinical patterns;
- formulate a basic differential diagnosis for the most common skin diseases;
- recognize the most common bacterial, viral, fungal, and parasitic skin infections;
- recognize and differentiate between the major types of dermatitis and eczema;
- explain the basic characteristics of connective tissue diseases and autoimmune dermatoses;
- recognize purpura, vasculitis, and other vascular disorders of the skin;
- recognize and assess pruritus, prurigo, and erythroderma;
- recognize and differentiate between the major papulosquamous disorders;
- recognize the most important disorders of the hair, nails, and cutaneous glands;
- recognize significant neurocutaneous and circulatory disorders of the skin;
- recognize cutaneous manifestations of tuberculosis and Lyme borreliosis;
- differentiate nevi and precancerous lesions from suspicious skin lesions;
- recognize the clinical signs of melanoma and other malignant skin tumors;
- recognize oral mucosal lesions associated with dermatological diseases;
- correlate dermatological manifestations with multisystem diseases;
- demonstrate knowledge of the most important sexually transmitted infections and diseases, including their modes of transmission, clinical presentation, diagnosis, treatment, and prevention;
- approach patients with sexually transmitted infections in a professional, confidential, and non-discriminatory manner;
- recognize dermatovenereological diseases and conditions specific to pregnancy;
- understand the relationship between psychological factors and dermatological diseases;
- understand the basic principles of psychodermatology;

- accurately interpret dermatological findings and correlate them with the results of additional diagnostic procedures;
- recognize dermatological emergencies and conditions requiring urgent or specialist management;
- explain the nature of the disease, treatment options, and preventive measures to the patient in clear and understandable language.

What Do We Do During Lectures and Practical Classes, and What Rules Will We Follow?

During lectures, we will primarily cover the **theoretical foundations of dermatovenereology**, including the etiology, pathogenesis, clinical features, diagnosis, differential diagnosis, and principles of treatment of the most important diseases.

However, dermatology cannot be learned effectively from textbooks alone. Therefore, **practical training** will be particularly important.

During practical classes, through direct work with patients, clinical photographs, images of characteristic lesions, and other teaching materials, you will learn how to:

- systematically examine the skin;
- recognize primary and secondary skin lesions;
- accurately describe dermatological lesions;
- determine the distribution and location of lesions;
- correlate clinical findings with possible diagnoses;
- formulate a differential diagnosis;
- select appropriate diagnostic procedures;
- understand the principles of therapeutic management.

You are expected to **participate actively in classes**. Dermatovenereology is not a subject that can be successfully mastered solely by studying immediately before the examination. Many dermatological conditions may have similar clinical presentations, so the ability to distinguish between them needs to be developed continuously.

You are particularly encouraged to ask questions during classes. In dermatology, several possible diagnoses may appear similar at first glance, so discussion is an important part of the learning process.

When electronic materials are used, students are required to use them responsibly and in accordance with institutional regulations. Photographing patients or medical records is not permitted without explicit authorization and full compliance with all applicable rules regarding patient privacy and medical confidentiality.

During clinical training, particular emphasis will be placed on **professional conduct toward patients**. Dermatological diseases, especially sexually transmitted infections, may be associated

with feelings of embarrassment, fear, or stigma. Therefore, future physicians have a responsibility to approach every patient professionally, confidentially, empathetically, and without judgment.

Attendance at **practical classes is particularly important**, as certain clinical skills cannot be fully acquired or compensated for through independent study alone.

The Particular Importance of the Dermatovenereological Examination

One of the fundamental objectives of this course is for students to learn how to **observe the skin as a clinical finding**.

When examining each patient, particular attention should be paid to:

- primary skin lesions;
- secondary skin lesions;
- color of the lesions;
- shape and size;
- borders;
- surface characteristics;
- consistency;
- location;
- distribution;
- symmetry;
- relationship to the surrounding skin;
- subjective symptoms, particularly pruritus and pain;
- duration and course of the disease.

In dermatology, an accurate description of a skin lesion is often the first step toward establishing a diagnosis.

For this reason, particular attention will be devoted to **dermatological terminology**. The aim is for students to move beyond simply saying that "the patient has red spots" and instead learn to describe precisely what they observe and, based on those findings, formulate an appropriate diagnostic framework.

Dermatovenereology and Patient Communication

Particular attention will be devoted to **communication with patients**.

In dermatological diseases, the appearance of the skin can significantly affect a patient's self-confidence, social functioning, and quality of life. Some conditions may also be associated with considerable social stigma.

When dealing with **sexually transmitted infections**, particular attention must be paid to patient privacy, confidentiality, and the manner in which sensitive questions are asked.

Future physicians are expected to be able to obtain sensitive information **without judging the patient** and to explain the diagnosis and treatment in a manner that is clear, respectful, and understandable to the patient.

How Will We Be Assessed?

During the semester, students will be assessed through various forms of knowledge and skills evaluation, in accordance with the regulations of the study program and the requirements of the course.

Assessment will include:

- theoretical knowledge of dermatovenereology;
- recognition of characteristic clinical presentations;
- knowledge of dermatological terminology and primary and secondary skin lesions;
- ability to accurately describe dermatological findings;
- ability to formulate a differential diagnosis;
- understanding of the pathogenesis and clinical features of diseases;
- knowledge of appropriate diagnostic procedures;
- understanding of the principles of treatment;
- practical clinical skills;
- professional conduct toward patients.

Successfully completing the course requires more than simply memorizing the names of diseases. Students are expected to understand **what a disease looks like, why it develops, how to recognize it, how to distinguish it from other conditions, how to diagnose it, and the basic principles of its treatment**.

What Does the Course Plan Look Like?

1. Structure and Function of the Skin and Skin Appendages

Anatomy and histology of the skin. Epidermis, dermis, and subcutaneous tissue. Skin appendages: hair, nails, sebaceous glands, and sweat glands. Protective, sensory, thermoregulatory, metabolic, and immunological functions of the skin.

2. Pathological Changes of the Skin: Primary and Secondary Lesions

Primary and secondary skin lesions. Morphology, color, size, shape, location, and distribution of skin lesions. Basic principles of describing dermatological findings.

3. Basic Principles of Diagnosing Skin Diseases

Dermatological history. Clinical examination of the skin, mucous membranes, hair, and nails. Basic principles of differential diagnostic reasoning and correlation of the clinical presentation with possible etiology and pathogenesis.

4. Most Common Diagnostic Procedures in Dermatovenereology

Dermoscopy, microbiological diagnostics, mycological and bacteriological examination, virological and parasitological diagnostics, skin biopsy and histopathological examination, allergy testing, laboratory and immunological diagnostics, and other supplementary diagnostic methods.

5. Treatment in Dermatovenereology

General principles of treatment of dermatological diseases. Topical and systemic therapy. Corticosteroids, antihistamines, antibiotics, antifungal, antiviral, and antiparasitic drugs. Immunomodulatory and biological therapies. Phototherapy and other physical treatment modalities. Surgical treatment of dermatological diseases.

6. Diseases Caused by Microorganisms

Viral, fungal, and bacterial skin infections. Clinical presentation, diagnosis, differential diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of the most important infectious dermatoses.

7. Parasitic Skin Diseases

Scabies, pediculosis, and other significant parasitic dermatoses. Clinical presentation, diagnosis, treatment, and epidemiological measures.

8. Allergic Diseases and Dermatitis

Dyshidrotic eczema, nummular eczema, irritant contact dermatitis, infectious eczema, atopic dermatitis, and other significant eczematous dermatoses. Basic principles of etiopathogenesis, diagnosis, differential diagnosis, and treatment.

9. Connective Tissue Diseases: Collagen Vascular Diseases

Systemic lupus erythematosus, dermatomyositis, scleroderma, and other connective tissue diseases with cutaneous manifestations. Clinical presentation, diagnosis, and principles of treatment.

10. Autoimmune Bullous Dermatoses

Pemphigus, bullous pemphigoid, and other autoimmune vesiculobullous dermatoses. Clinical features, diagnostic procedures, differential diagnosis, and basic principles of treatment.

11. Purpura and Vasculitis

Clinical forms of purpura. Cutaneous vasculitis and systemic vasculitides with cutaneous manifestations. Etiology, clinical presentation, diagnosis, and treatment.

12. Pruritus and Prurigo

Acute and chronic pruritus. Localized and generalized pruritus. Prurigo. Dermatological and systemic causes of pruritus and basic principles of the therapeutic approach.

13. Erythroderma

Definition, etiology, and clinical presentation of erythroderma. Most common causes, complications, and therapeutic approach. Erythroderma as a potentially serious dermatological emergency.

14. Papulosquamous Diseases

Psoriasis, lichen planus, pityriasis rosea, and other significant papulosquamous dermatoses. Clinical presentation, differential diagnosis, and principles of treatment.

15. Disorders of the Skin Appendages

Hair diseases and disorders of hair growth. Alopecia. Nail disorders. Diseases of the sebaceous and sweat glands and other significant disorders of the skin appendages.

16. Neurocutaneous Diseases

The most important neurocutaneous diseases and cutaneous manifestations of neurological and genetic disorders.

17. Circulatory Disorders of the Skin

Vascular anomalies and vascular dermatoses. Hemangiomas. Diseases associated with impaired peripheral circulation and other significant circulatory changes of the skin.

18. Cutaneous Tuberculosis

Forms of cutaneous tuberculosis. Clinical presentation, diagnosis, differential diagnosis, treatment, and prevention.

19. Nodular Dermatoses

Clinical approach to nodular skin lesions. The most important inflammatory, infectious, and neoplastic nodular dermatoses.

20. Lyme Borreliosis

Etiology and epidemiology. Cutaneous manifestations of Lyme borreliosis. Diagnosis, differential diagnosis, treatment, and prevention.

21. Skin Tumors, Nevi, and Precancerous Skin Lesions

Benign skin tumors. Melanocytic and non-melanocytic nevi. Precancerous lesions, including actinic keratosis. Basal cell carcinoma and squamous cell carcinoma. Melanoma. Clinical recognition of suspicious lesions, diagnosis, treatment, and prevention.

22. Oral Mucosal Changes Associated with Dermatological Diseases

The most important diseases and lesions of the oral mucosa in the context of dermatological diseases. Oral manifestations of autoimmune, infectious, and papulosquamous diseases. Differential diagnosis of oral lesions.

23. Cutaneous Manifestations of Multisystem Diseases

Dermatological signs of systemic diseases. Cutaneous manifestations of endocrine, metabolic, hematological, gastrointestinal, rheumatological, and other systemic diseases. The importance of the skin in the early recognition of systemic disease.

24. Sexually Transmitted Infections and Diseases

Epidemiology and prevention of sexually transmitted infections. Medical history and clinical examination. Syphilis, gonorrhea, chlamydial infections, genital herpes, HPV infections and anogenital warts, HIV infection and its cutaneous manifestations, as well as other sexually transmitted infections.

Particular attention is devoted to **diagnosis, differential diagnosis, treatment, patient follow-up, prevention of infection transmission, patient counseling, and the appropriate management of sexual partners**.

25. Dermatovenereological Diseases and Conditions in Pregnancy

Physiological skin changes during pregnancy. Pregnancy-specific dermatoses. Effects of pregnancy on pre-existing dermatological diseases. Diagnosis and treatment with consideration of maternal and fetal safety, as well as safety during breastfeeding.

26. Psychodermatology

The relationship between psychological factors and skin diseases. The impact of dermatological diseases on mental health and quality of life. Psychogenic pruritus and other psychodermatological disorders. Stress-related dermatoses. Basic principles of the psychological approach to dermatological patients.

What Should We Study for the Exam?

The main resources for exam preparation include:

- recommended dermatovenereology textbooks and literature;
- lecture materials;
- practical class materials;
- clinical photographs and examples of characteristic lesions discussed during classes;
- additional materials made available to students;
- course content and learning outcomes specified in the course syllabus.

When studying, we particularly recommend that you do not rely solely on memorizing written descriptions of diseases. **Dermatology is a visual and clinical discipline.** You need to learn simultaneously what a disease looks like, where it occurs, how it develops, what symptoms it causes, which characteristic skin lesions are associated with it, and which other conditions should be considered in the differential diagnosis.

The ultimate goal of this course is not for you to be able to list as many dermatological diagnoses as possible after passing the exam.

The goal is that, when you are faced with a patient presenting with a skin lesion, you are able to pause, observe carefully, accurately describe what you see, and ask yourself:

"What could this be, what else should I consider, and what should I do to establish the correct diagnosis?"

This is precisely the type of clinical reasoning that transforms dermatovenereology from the study of a large number of diseases into **a genuine clinical skill**.