DEMENTIA IN LONG-TERM CARE
SKIN PICKING DISORDERS

Skin picking disorders, also known as, pathological skin picking, neurotic excoriation, dematotillomania, and psychogenic excoriation.

1. A thorough medical evaluation should be completed to rule out non-psychogenic causes. These conditions can include:
   - Scabies
   - Atopic dermatitis (soap, medication rash, diet)
   - Psoriasis
   - Blistering skin disorders
   - Initial stages of skin breakdown

2. Social anxiety can lead to skin picking, especially if it is recognized when outside the room for activities or in the dining room. Making sure this condition is treated may eliminate or reduce the frequency of the behavior.

3. Stimulant medications, such as amphetamines, like methylphenidate, or agents for Parkinson's disease, such as ropinorole or pramipexole, due to their highly dopaminergic nature, can lead to or exacerbate skin picking.

4. Delirium or substance withdrawal can cause tactile hallucinations, which could produce this skin-picking behavior, and should be excluded as a cause.

5. Nonpharmacologic interventions include:
   - cutting nails as short as safely possible
   - apply lotion to areas that are the focus of the picking
   - use gloves if needed
   - long sleeves or arm coverings
   - maintain activities that will occupy the resident's hands to deter picking from inactivity

6. If the resident is cognitively intact and psychologically receptive, a trial of cognitive-behavioral therapy can be helpful in reducing or eliminating this behavior.

7. Pharmacologic agents can be helpful:
   - SSRI antidepressants, most specifically fluoxetine and citalopram, can help reduce the desire to pick, especially in light of the possibility the behavior is either related to an obsessional or impulsive cause.
   - Doses may have to be higher than seen in depression.
   - Opioid antagons specifically naltrexone, can eliminate the reinforcing nature of this behavior. Doses between 25-50 mg a day have been utilized.
   - N-acetyl cysteine also is employed to treat skin picking Doses of 1.2-1.8 g a day were cited in medical reports.

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