

Francesco Bruno

Cartoons on Acne



Drawings: Ernesto Tomasini

Foreword: O. Braun-Falco

Useful advice for patients affected with acne
Popular beliefs - Correct instructions

Foreword

It's very important to spread to the population correct information about important skin diseases. Therefore, it seems to be a very important task to me: "Lo specialista Dermalologo ti insegnerà a conoscere e leggere la tua pelle"* , but also information about abnormalities in the skin diseases, which may become a great individual or social importance for patients, such as neurodermatitis or skin cancer.

It is essential to present this information in an easy and impressive way and therefore it is great that a dermatologist and an artist designer have worked together to prepare respective cartoons. I remember one of the first cartoons on melanoma.

Now, Francesco Bruno has written a further cartoon on Acne. This cartoon has been excellently prepared and directed to the young people which may suffer physically and psychologically from moderate or severe acne vulgaris. This booklet is very informative and gives also corrections on popular beliefs. It will be of practical advice for all those who are suffering from this frequent skin disease.

I wish good success for this booklet with a worldwide distribution.

Best wishes to the author.

O. Braun-Falco, Munich

* The dermatologist will teach to you to know and "read" your skin.

The author

Francesco Bruno

Dermatologist in Palermo since 1978.

His field is above all, research on acne. He was influenced from the German school of Dermatology particularly from Dermatology Clinic in Munich with Prof. O. Braun-Falco.

He is in touch with the most important scientists on acne in the world, promoting and organizing Update Conference on this field.

He is Scientific Secretary of ISPLAD (International Society of Plastic and Aesthetic Dermatology).

The artist

Ernesto Tomasini

He studied animation and drawing at “California Institute of the Arts” in Los Angeles.

He has worked as a designer for several production companies and newspapers.

In 1985 he moved his artistic attention to the theatre.

Today he lives in London, working as actor, singer, producer, in prestigious, international, theatre companies. (Cherub Co., Acting Co., Lindsay Kemp Co.).

Preface

This book has been written for young people affected with acne. It is not the goal of the booklet “to do it yourself”. It should give some clear information about:

What is acne?

How can you treat acne?



Why do you have acne?

What are the best procedures to follow?

I will try to make you forget all common misconceptions about this disease. I will give some particular advice, above all about anxiety, that makes the disease worse.

I hope it will help patient. I tried don't use difficult, scientific words and I will help you to easily treat acne.

My suggestions are based only on my own experience as dermatologist who has done an long exeperience (a trip) with thousands of patients affected with acne.

I apologize with all my colleagues dermatologists for all the mistakes.

I thank a lot Ernesto Tomasini that always gave in cartoons my ideas.

Thanks to my friend Paolo Piazza for all the teaching and advice during the preparation of this booklet.

Francesco Bruno, Palermo 2002

IN RELATIONSHIP TO THE WORLD AROUND US

Acne is certainly the most common skin disease among young people. About eighty per cent of adolescents are affected by it.



Few people can say they have not had at least one pimple on their face during adolescence.

Unfortunately acne is visible and both friends and people around you notice it.



This, often, influences your relationship with others.

THE OTHERS

Who are they?

- a) **yourself**: you look at yourself in the mirror and you hate your acne!



b) **your friends:** above all those belonging to a different sex. “Will he (she) like me with all these pimples on my face?”



c) **parents:** there are two groups of parents who have children with acne.

First

Those who are not very interested in your problem and undervalue or ignore it.

Second

Parents who are too anxious. Often they have had acne during adolescence and they are too apprehensive. Their advice is often wrong and can even hinder the dermatologist's treatment.

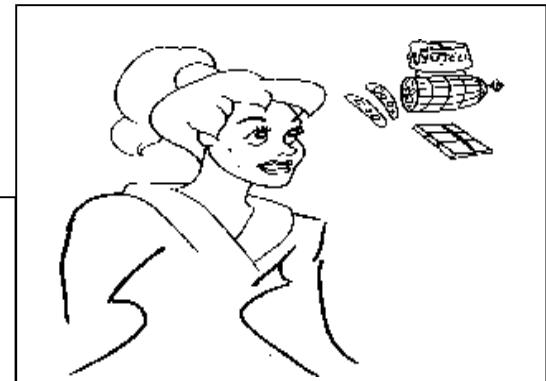
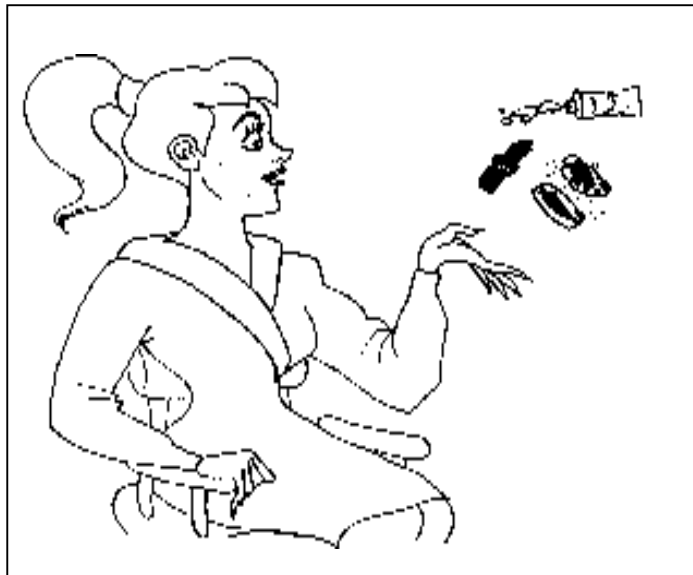
Examples:

*“Do not eat chocolate, salami, chips, cakes!”
(just your favourite food!).*

“Do not go dancing, you could sweat!”

“Do not come home too late!”

“Do not wear any make-up!”



**“IN MEDIO STAT VIRTUS!”
“THE TRUTH IS IN THE MIDDLE!”**

I suggest parents should help their children to listen only to the dermatologist’s advice and medical treatment.

A good patient-dermatologist relationship is very important for a good treatment result!



WHAT IS ACNE?

Acne mainly affects the skin of the face and trunk where the sebaceous glands are numerous.

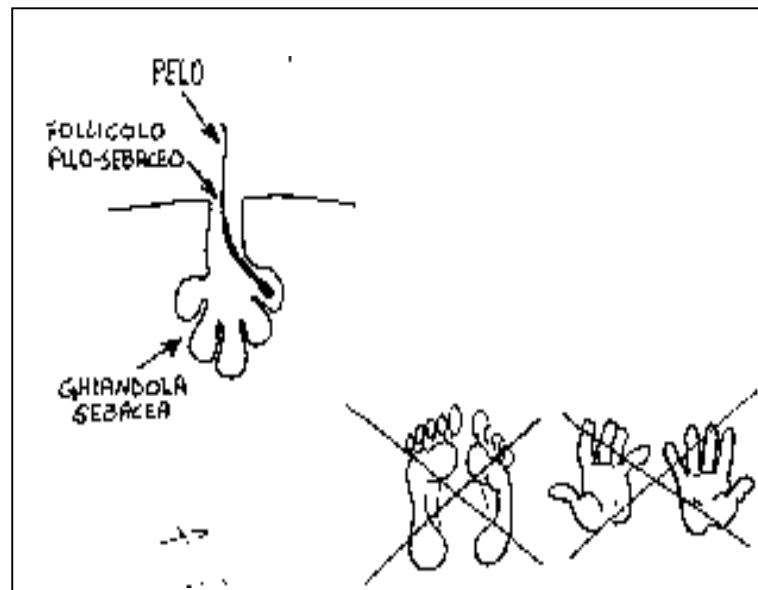
These glands produce sebum (fatty acid). In young people with acne, these glands are more active, produce more sebum, and consequently **SEBORRHEA** occurs.

THE HATEFUL PIMPLE

Seborrhea is irritating and its components are comedogenic. This leads to the formation of comedones or blackheads. They represent the primary lesion of acne.

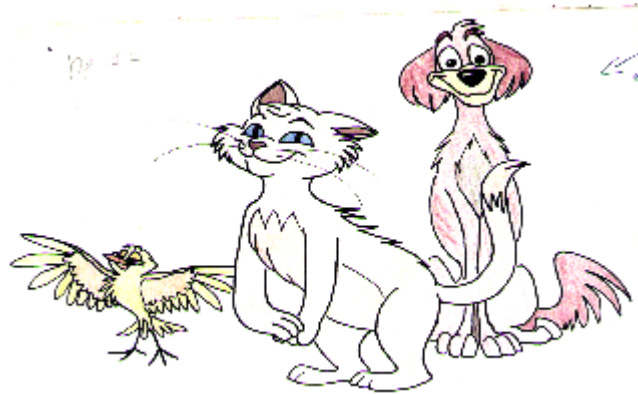
SEBACEOUS GLANDS

Sebum should lubricate and protect hair. Every hair has its own sebaceous gland. They are all over the body except on the palms and soles.



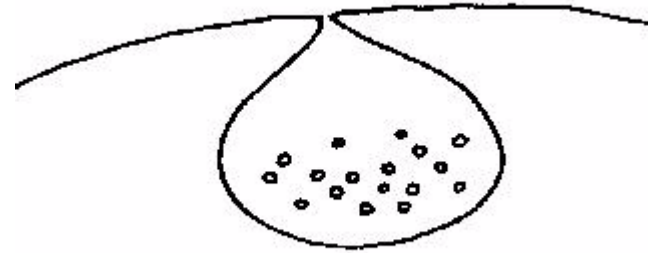
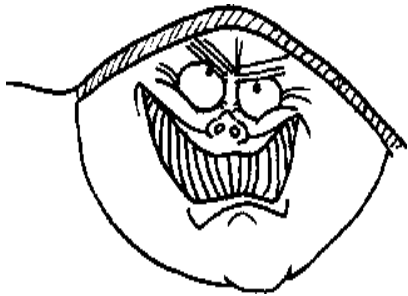
Sebaceous glands are larger on the face, back, chest and scalp.

In fact, a lot of adolescents complain that these areas are greasy and oily. Some author believe the sebum has a protective and impermeable function. Animals use sebum to coat their fur or the plumage against external factors.



THE COMEDO

Because pustules come from comedones, they are called “time bombs”.



In this picture you can easily see the **comedo** with its characteristic **blackhead**. This is not dirt but melanin, the substance that gives color to the skin.

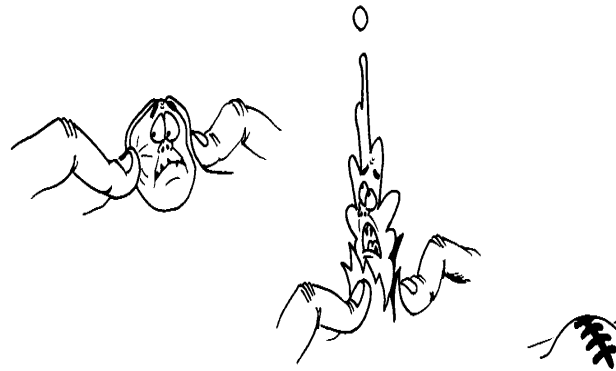
DON'T MAKE THESE USUAL MISTAKES



Don't touch! Don't squeeze comedones!

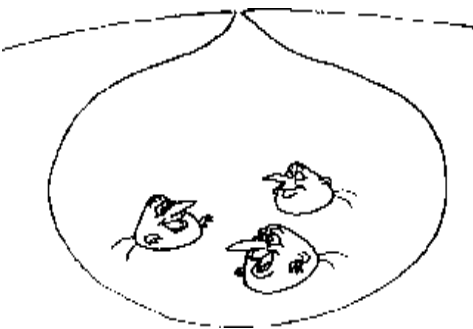
If you do this, it will not improve!

You must not remove the comedo by squeezing it. As you can see in the drawing, the result could lead to spots and scars!



THE PUSTULE

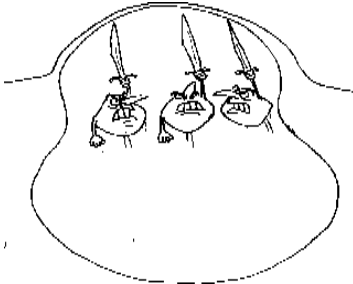
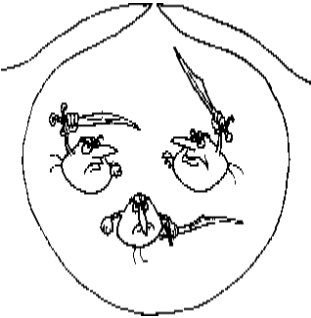
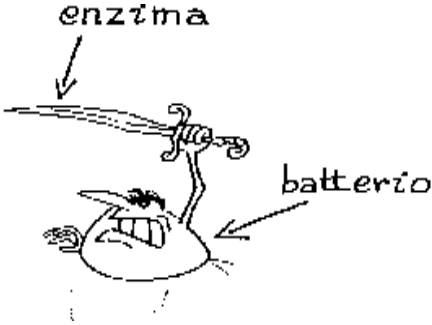
There are bacteria and fungi (yeasts) in the comedones. These are the microflora of acne.



organisms has a difficult name: **PROPIONIBACTERIUM ACNES**



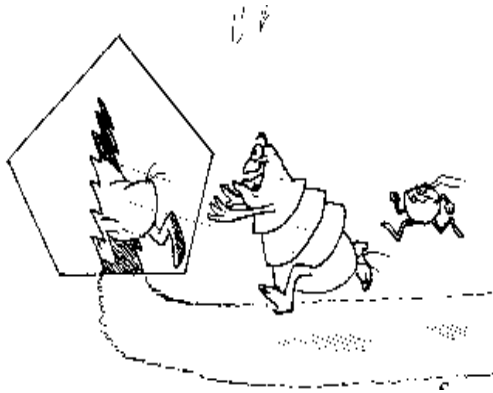
ie keratin of the comedo, then it breaks the comedo by some “arms” called **enzymes**.



The inflammatory changes of acne start from this destruction. Consequently, destructive action causes inflammation in the dermis. Small vessels become larger and the skin looks red and it burns.

Remember! Acne is inflammation, not an infection!

The inflammation “attracts” other germs that cause the hateful pustule.



CAUSES OF ACNE

The real cause is not yet known. Over the last few years we have discovered some factors explaining the origins of acne.

First: hormones.

There are a lot of **common beliefs** about this topic.

Examples:

- “acne is a hormone disease” ;
- “acne is an endocrine disorder”;
- “acne can only be cured by hormones!”

It is all wrong!



Acne is not an endocrine disease!

THE CORRECT ROLE OF HORMONES

During puberty our body has some physiological changes. We are beginning to grow up!

Girls:

↙ There is the menarche. The ovary produces eggs. The breast begin to grow etc...



Boys



The beard grows. The voice changes etc...

The hormones involved in these changes, are mainly estrogens (female hormones produced by ovary) and androgens (male hormones). In a woman, these are produced by the ovary and the suprarenal (adrenal) glands. In a man by the testicle and suprarenal glands.

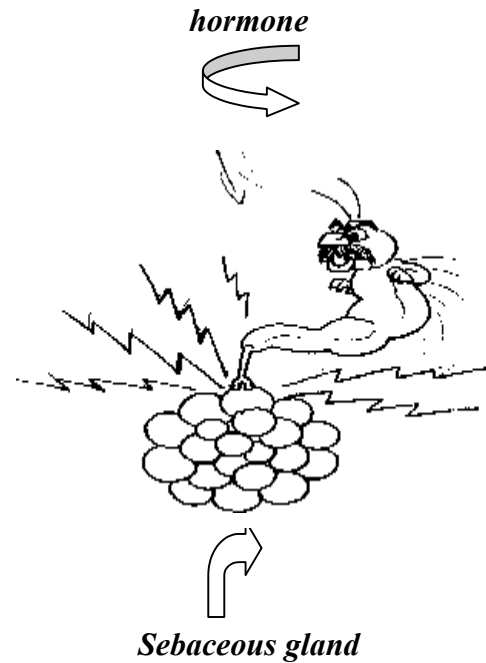
ANDROGENS AND TESTOSTERONE

They are the main cause of acne.

The androgens regulate the production of sebum from the sebaceous glands through testosterone which acts directly on the gland cells.

In patients with acne, sebaceous glands are very sensitive to androgens.

This increased sensitivity of the sebaceous glands has often a genetic cause.



The result of tests on acne patients' hormones are normal, so **we cannot consider acne a hormonal disease.**



ACNE AND SUN

People usually believe that sun exposure is a good treatment for acne, above all in summer. Most patients after a long experience to sunshine, notice that their skin and pimples tend to dry up. Unfortunately this is a mere dream!

Despite this, sunlight and ultraviolet rays damage the skin and give an increase number of comedones. (**PHOTOCOMEDOGENICITY**).

Therefore I suggest to use sunscreen.

Be careful about sunscreens, some of them are comedogenic!

HOW CAN YOU TREAT ACNE ?

There are many different methods. Pharmacists have many products but not all are effective.

First of all we must distinguish between:

ORAL TREATMENT:

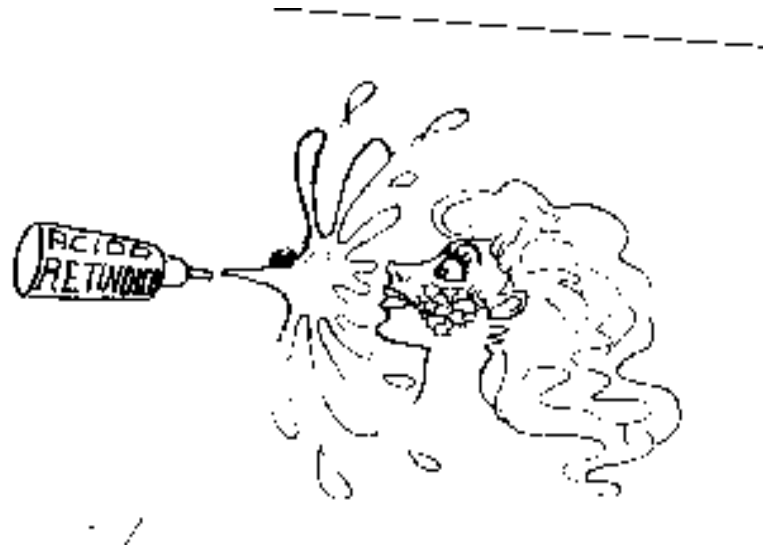
Tablets, pills, etc.....

TOPICAL TREATMENT:

Cream, lotions, masks....

RETINOIC ACID (TRETINOIN)

Cream lotion



In my opinion this is the most important treatment for comedonal acne. If I have been clear, you will understand that the “**main enemy**” is the **comedo**. The number of comedones is reduced, thanks to exfoliant action (peeling).

Exfoliation-Peeling

Corneum is the most superficial layer of the skin. It is the first protection for skin and then it turns over.

Retinoic acid interferes in the formation of comedones and increases the rate of horny cell production. Wrinkles also benefit from it, but it is not the drug for “eternal youth”, as this cartoon shows.



OTHER EXFOLIANT (PEELING) AGENTS

Over the last few years, too many peeling products have been introduced: **glycolic acid**, (70 per cent) can be used for treatment of small scars. It is considered a superficial peeling. It can be used in summer. Lighter exfoliants are natural abrasives (peat – clay).

TOPICAL ANTIBIOTICS

There are topical antibiotics widely used for treating pustular acne, very often in association with retinoic acid. The most commonly used are erythromycin (gel – cream), gentamycin, clyndamycin, tetracyclines. Your dermatologist will prescribe the most effective.

Other topical agents.

Azelaic acid, spironolactone, salicylic acid, resorcinol, benzoyl peroxide.

GENERAL TREATMENT

Tablets, pills...



Isotretinoin: it is used for the treatment of acne conglobata, the most severe type of acne. The drug has side effects and contraindications, so a careful check-up during the therapy is necessary.

Oral antibiotics: are recommended in acne pustulosa. The most commonly used are: tetracyclines (oxycycline and minocycline). They are very often given in association with topical treatment.

Contraceptives: Contraceptive pills (estrogens), can in some cases, help young women affected with acne, especially if associated with antiandrogens. Pills containing desogestrel are contraindicated in acne.

THERAPY OF SCARS

There are medical and surgical options.

Medical

Peeling lotions, containing either glycolic acid or resorcinol or salicylic acid or trichloroacetic acid, in different concentration are used. All these exfoliative agents must only be used by specialists in dermatology.

Surgical

When the scars are deep, surgery can be a right solution. There are a lot of different techniques: resurfacing laser, micropunch, etc..

These are difficult and delicate methods, therefore must be only managed from the Dermatologist.

CONCLUSION



At the beginning I wrote that I have no scientific pretence.

This booklet is a guide on how “to face” acne with better knowledge about the most effective therapies.

At the end you will find a list of **common beliefs** and **practical advice**.

I hope it will help all patients affected with acne, so they will avoid making mistakes that often make the disease worse.

Here is a list of the common beliefs and wrong ideas about acne.

Wrong:



acne is caused by an increase of sexual hormones;

it gets worse after eating food like chocolate, salami, chips ... etc...

only adolescents are involved;

topical corticosteroid, vitamin B12, folic acid, yeast in tablets, are all useful;

all types of contraceptive pills treat acne;

squeezing pimples can help acne to heal;

ultraviolet light “dries” the pustules;

after a birth of a child, acne heals forever!



Practical advice to follow during treatment:

follow your dermatologist's advice!



*Don't stop the treatment yourself if the treatment is too long;
try to accept acne without anxiety;*



don't listen advice from friends;

believe only qualified medical articles;

don't squeeze! Especially when the lesions are inflamed;

*don't believe in fast and "miracle" drug of unknown origin.
Some of them could damage your health;*



*if you like sport don't take any kind of hormones or high doses of vitamins
"Body building acne";*





don't look at yourself in the mirror all the day; !

don't isolate yourself because of acne;

don't be stressed by pimples;

call your dermatologist. He will be ready to give you cosmetic advice as well.



Today there are a lot of camouflage products which are compatible with treatment.

*When you see your acne improving, do not stop the treatment suddenly;
follow treatment prescribed by your dermatologist.*

