Skin-deep Cases
Stanford T. Shulman, MD

By back by reader demand, this issue of Pediatric Annals includes a number of challenging cases and examples of interesting and important conditions with dermatologic manifestations. Were I to discuss individual cases, I would take away from readers the opportunity to try to guess the correct diagnosis. Nevertheless, I venture to say that every primary care physician has had at least one patient with one of these diagnoses present to the office or clinic.

As I have noted in the past, there are very few dermatology stamps, although I have many that honor Robert Koch (I’ll save them for another time). Therefore, I have chosen three stamps that celebrate the fight against AIDS to illustrate this column, as well as another interesting stamp. The AIDS stamps include the block of four from India (see page 73) and the colorful stamp from Bangladesh (top right, this page), which honor World AIDS Day, September 1, 2006. In addition, Monaco’s stamp (lower right, this page) honors several anti-AIDS (or “SIDA,” in French) organizations.

The greenish souvenir sheet (see page 73) from Sweden (Sverige, see page 73) picturing plants was issued to honor the 300th birthday celebration of Carl von Linné (known as Carolus Linnaeus). Linnaeus (1707-1778) was a physician who became a great botanist and was very influential in the history of science for originating the binomial (genus and species, like Homo sapiens) nomenclature system of taxonomy in science. Linnaeus’s understanding of nature was rooted in the Bible, and he believed that the species were fixed, surviving unchanged from those created by God in the Garden of Eden: “There are just as many species as issued in pairs from the Creator’s hands.” As detailed in an interesting December 30, 2007, New York Times travel section article, the Comte de Buffon was Linnaeus’s contemporary and archenemy who believed that species changed over time because of their habitat, even though he had no clear idea of evolution. Charles Darwin, who a century later proved the existence of evolution, praised Buffon. The latter attacked Linnaeus for imposing...
an artificial order on the disorderly world of nature. Linnaeus applied his classification system to plants but also to animals. His system also profoundly influenced physicians’ attempts to classify diseases during his lifetime and for many years beyond that.

Evidence of Buffon’s impact is apparent today at the Jardin des Plantes and the Muséum National d’Histoire Naturelle in Paris on the south bank of the Seine. His country home in Montbard, an hour southeast of Paris, can be visited. Similarly, Linnaeus’s home and garden close to Uppsala Castle in Uppsala, Sweden, as well as his birthplace in Stenbrohult and his country house and farm just south of Uppsala, can be visited today.