

Why dermatology should be a priority for STPs

Nick Evans

Chair of Trustees

The Psoriasis Association



Skin disease – there's a lot of it about

- 13m people a year across England & Wales
- 630 consultations per GP per year
- 6% will be referred for specialist consultation
 - 35-50% skin lesions
 - Eczema, acne & psoriasis
- 3,315,111 OP attendances (England in 2016-7)
- Dermatology – one of the big four

The Psoriasis Association in 2018

- Nearly 1,000 telephone calls
- Over 800,000 web site visits
- 12,000 registered in on-line forums
- 10,000 followers on Twitter
- 6,000 in our Facebook group
- WhatsApp launched last year

Joe

- 16 years old – contacted via WhatsApp
- Flexural psoriasis including facial area
- No friends – mum is ‘too busy’ – ‘I feel very alone’
- Locking himself in his room to avoid going to school
- ‘no one cares’

Kerry

- Having to wait nearly 12 months for a dermatology appointment for a psoriasis flare – ‘in despair’
- GP only prescribes steroid-based treatments – was unaware that alternatives were possible
- Very stressed & anxious

Lesley

- Five years of recurrent bouts of sore throat & rashes, with aching joints and eye problems with repeated visits to GP
- No mention of psoriasis – eventually referred to a dermatologist who diagnosed
- No explanation of the condition or information as to how to use/apply treatments

The Psoriasis Association contacts – some common themes

- Many people
 - have no clear understanding of psoriasis or treatments
 - are confused about how and when to apply treatment, particularly where more than one is prescribed
- Delayed diagnosis and misdiagnosis are common experiences
- Common concerns
 - access to specialist care – initially or subsequently
 - treatment availability / eligibility – ‘rationing’
- Many patients receive little or no information about possible complications of the condition or side effects of their treatment

Comments from social media

- “five years to get my GP to refer me”
- “I didn’t have to wait long – only 3 months”
- “Four months for an ‘emergency’ referral”
- “I waited six months for an appointment which was cancelled”

More experiences

- “The nearest dermatologist is 125 miles away. When I had light treatment that meant travelling six hours a day three days a week”
- “I had an ineffective course of phototherapy and had to wait 10 months to see the dermatologist afterwards”
- “When I had a flare up it was impossible to get an appointment for four months”

Life impact

- “I have throughout my life lost huge amounts of time Even now I lose something like two hours a day putting creams on ...”
- “Without using skin camouflage to face [rosacea] and occasionally backs of hands [psoriasis] I would frequently be asked what my medical conditions are ... I don't think its reasonable to be questioned on my medical history by a complete stranger in the middle of Tesco's ...”

British Skin Foundation survey, 2012

- 729 respondents
- 29% felt their condition was a significant barrier to finding a partner
- 47% had been subjected to verbal abuse related to their condition
- 16% admitted to self-harming as a consequence of their disease
- 17% stated they had contemplated suicide at some stage

“I don’t like people staring at me so I avoid going out of the house as much as I can”

“Seeing the right person at the right time”

- Better teaching & training for medical students and for GPs
- More consultant dermatologists
- Developing the role of GPwSIs
- Developing the role of specialist nurses

“Getting it right first time”

- Better teaching & training for medical students and for GPs
- More consultant dermatologists
- Developing the role of GPwSIs
- Developing the role of specialist nurses

- Information about and understanding of the condition and the treatment
- Involvement in decisions about their own care
- Joined up care, appropriate to their needs and accessible when they need it