

Four Easy Ways to Empower Patients During Psoriasis Awareness Month

The National Psoriasis Foundation has advice dermatologists can share with patients. Plus, there's exciting news about current and future therapies.

This month is Psoriasis Awareness month, and the National Psoriasis Foundation (NPF) encourages patients to get involved in efforts to raise awareness of the disease and promote research. In addition to sponsoring its annual patient conference, the NPF website recommends ways patients can observe the month.

Fantastic Four

The NP proposes four easy ways patients can take action this month and throughout the year. Recommending these strategies to your patients is an easy way to help them better understand their disease and feel a greater sense of control over it. NPF suggests patients:

1. Discuss psoriasis with friends, co-workers, employers, etc. Faced with so many misconceptions about the disease, NPF says, there's ample opportunity to educate others about psoriasis and its effects on patients. Patients may feel more comfortable among acquaintances who understand their disease.

2. Contact local media. With so many therapeutic developments lately, there's been plenty for the media to report, but psoriasis still isn't a headliner. Patients—and physicians, for that matter—could request that local media cover Psoriasis Awareness Month or relevant stories.

3. Contact members of Congress. Here's another one physicians can do, too. NPF recommends writing to sena-

tors and/or state representative(s) to urge funding for psoriasis research. The NPF advocacy department can offer help. Reach them at (800) 723-9166 or through psoriasis.org.

4. Become a member of the Psoriasis Foundation. Referring psoriasis patients (particularly the newly diagnosed) to NPF may be a good idea. They'll get access to educational materials, support group information, and other services. NPF is urging individuals to join or

renew their membership, noting that there is strength in numbers to promote further research and development.

Cause for Excitement

Recent developments show cause for excitement about psoriasis. As the news on this page reports, there are promising developments in existing and future treatments, plus an important coverage decision for laser therapy in psoriasis.

New In Your Practice

An Oral Test. A 12-week treatment with oral pimecrolimus appears to produce a dose-dependent reduction in psoriasis severity, according to a recent study in *British Journal of Dermatology* (152:1219). At week seven, a twice daily dosage of 20mg or 30mg of oral pimecrolimus resulted in mean percentage reductions of 51.3 percent and 54 percent, respectively, in baseline PASI scores, compared to 3.1 percent for placebo-treated patients. Adverse events ranged from mild to moderate severity.

Highs and Lows. The topical vitamin D analogue continues to demonstrate benefit for patients with mild to moderate psoriasis, QuatRx recently reported based on Phase 2B studies. The study found that both high and low dose bexocalcidol met the primary endpoint of the Physician's Global Assessment showing psoriatic lesions clear or almost clear, with high dose bexocalcidol showing a significant reduction in Psoriasis Symptom Severity and affected body surface area compared with vehicle. Bexocalcidol was well tolerated with infrequent adverse events and did not result in elevation of serum or urine calcium.

History Report. Enbrel (etanercept, Amgen/Wyeth) appears to be the biologic therapy most widely used by dermatologists for moderate to severe psoriasis and by rheumatologists for rheumatoid arthritis, according to the recent Decision Resources PhysicianForum report "Impact of Biologics for Rheumatoid Arthritis and Psoriasis." • In other Enbrel news, the FDA recently approved an expanded indication for Enbrel to improve physical function in psoriatic arthritis patients, as well as approved a label update that includes data indicating Enbrel inhibits joint destruction for two years for psoriatic patients. • Psoriasis patients treated with 50mg of Enbrel (etanercept, Amgen/Wyeth) twice weekly for 12 weeks followed by a reduced dose of 25mg twice weekly for 12 weeks experienced more rapid improvement and a better overall response than patients treated with a continuous 25mg dosage for 24 weeks, says a recent study of 583 patients in *British Journal of Dermatology* (152:1304). The dose reduction at week 12 did not decrease efficacy. By week 24, 54 percent in the dose reduction group and 45 percent in the continuous 25mg group achieved PASI 75.