



Seminar F

The Gaps in Clinical Management of Psoriasis in the Biologics Era



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Dr. Ho graduated from HKU in 1986. After completion of basic physician training in University Medical Unit, QMH, Dr. Ho joined Social Hygiene Service (DH) in 1992. He was appointed Consultant Dermatologist in 2009, then assumed Head of SHS in 2010 and Head of Public Health Services Branch, CHP since July 2018. In different periods of time, he has been appointed Hon Clinical Associate Professor in both CUHK and HKU, Hon Visiting Consultant of the Department of Medicine QEH, Department of O&G QMH, member and Chairman of the Specialty board in Dermatology and Venereology of the HK College of Physicians. Dr. Ho has been actively participating in various CME activities organized by the local professional bodies in the past 20 years.

Psoriasis is a chronic inflammatory skin disease with accelerated epidermal proliferation related to dysregulation of the immune system. It is estimated to affect 0.3% to slightly less than 0.6% of local population. Though 5-30% of psoriasis patients will be complicated by arthropathy, psoriasis is rarely life threatening, leading to the misconception that skin diseases are somewhat less serious than other medical illnesses. From the perspective of the impact to those with the disease, it can be life ruining due to pruritus, cosmetic disfigurement and social stigmatisation. This negative impact on health related quality of life (HRQOL) was confirmed by studies conducted locally and in the Western population.

Treatment of psoriasis is guided by the severity of disease. There are international guidelines on the hierarchy of treatment. In gist, for those with less severe disease, topical treatments are the mainstay of therapy whereas for those with more severe disease, UV light therapy, systemic drug therapy will be considered. However, neither UV light therapy nor systemic drug therapies are welcome by the patients. In recent years, biologic drugs which target specific molecules involved in the inflammatory pathway are developed. These new biologics are more convenient and potent than the conventional therapies. So much so, some people with long standing disease recalcitrant to conventional treatments may achieve almost complete disease clearance. Most available biologics are already marketed in HK.

This short talk aims to summarise the current medical management of psoriasis with a view to facilitate communication between the attending physicians including the primary care physicians and people with psoriasis before they are referred for specialist care in either the private or public sectors. The same principles will also be applicable to access to novel but expensive treatment for other skin diseases including atopic eczema.