



Dermatological Society of Malaysia **Persatuan Dermatologi Malaysia (PDM)**

KULIT – Living with Psoriasis PDM Campaign 2007

(Article 3 – ‘U’ – You, The Individual)

You are in charge of managing your psoriasis

This six-part KULIT article series by the Persatuan Dermatologi Malaysia aims to raise awareness of psoriasis. In this third article, PDM President Dr Allan Yee emphasises that ultimately the individual is key in the management of the disease.

Psoriasis may seem only skin deep, but it has its beginnings inside the body. The red, scaly, flaky, and itchy patches occur when the skin cells multiply too quickly as a result of inflammation caused by activated T-cells in the body's immune system. Mild psoriasis is treated with topical treatments. More severe psoriasis requires oral (systemic) treatments or phototherapy or injection treatments with biologics.

If you have psoriasis, remember that the most important individual in the management of your condition is you. There are two aspects to this. First, it means that you must assume an active – in fact, the most active – role in the process. Second, it means that when dealing with psoriasis's emotional impact, you must not lose sight of who you are as a person.

Playing an active role

When we are ill, most of us long to be taken care of, and nursed back to health. We look to others – medication from doctors, help with office deadlines from colleagues, chicken soup from our mothers, spiritual guidance from God. This is natural, and it reflects our essential nature – that we need help from others. But we also sometimes forget to include ourselves in that support team.

Play an active role in managing your psoriasis. If you think you may have psoriasis, make that decision to get confirmation of the diagnosis, and talk to the doctor about your symptoms.

If you have been diagnosed, keep your doctor informed, so you can work toward achieving your treatment goals. Monitor your own treatment.

Keep yourself updated on developments. When you hear about advanced treatments such as biologics, or different methods of administering treatment (creams, injection, etc), don't be shy to ask your doctor. He or she can advise you on suitability, cost and other factors.

That said, it's also important to know when to draw the line. Help the doctor help you, but don't take on his or her role.



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The emotional impact of psoriasis

A disease like psoriasis, with its skin lesions, literally affects what others see, and what you yourself see when you look in the mirror. Because of this, there is also an impact on your inner wellbeing. You are forced to cope not only with the disease, but also people's reactions to it.

Finding out you have psoriasis can cause you to experience a range of emotions. Skin lesions may make you feel unattractive, and ashamed of your body. Some people with psoriasis stay home to avoid social situations. Some have difficulty interacting with co-workers, and even family and friends, because of the appearance of their skin.

You may feel confused or angry. You may look for people to blame. Depression is also common. Psoriasis can have a strong negative impact on the quality of your life – if you let it.

Greater emotional wellbeing

Practical matters are clearly essential in managing psoriasis – but equally important is your emotional wellbeing.

Like effective treatment, a strong emotional disposition can help you feel better and lead a normal life. Find a balance between positive acceptance of your condition (psoriasis is a part of you) – and a healthy separation from it (psoriasis does not define you as a person; you are still you).

Understand your own character. If you have been self-conscious about your appearance all your life, give yourself more time to adjust. Make it easier for yourself by choosing clothes that minimise visibility of lesions.

Being open and honest will go a long way toward keeping your relationships healthy, and at the same time increasing general public awareness.

Build your self-esteem, reduce your self-consciousness. Meet others with psoriasis. Connecting with people who understand your condition and feelings can be comforting and useful. Psoriasis affects millions of people around the world; many have successfully found their own approach to leading normal lives. Join the local support group, Psoriasis Association of Selangor and FT. (Contact person – Eugene Cross 03-8948 4335)

Also understand that your emotional state is not independent of the physical aspects. Therefore, maintain a healthy lifestyle. Exercise regularly and eat a healthy diet. Reduce stress with relaxation techniques. Keep a diary to pinpoint situations, places or events that trigger your stress. Understanding your triggers can empower you and help make psoriasis more manageable.



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Psoriasis affects 2-3 percent of Malaysians. This is the third of a six-part series from PDM's "KULIT – Living with Psoriasis" Campaign 2007. For more on psoriasis, treatment options and KULIT, visit www.dermatology.org.my or email kulitcampaign@yahoo.com. This article is a guide to help you better understand psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis. Consult a suitably qualified medical practitioner before acting on any information contained above. KULIT is a community programme sponsored by Wyeth Malaysia.