Are practitioners equipped to support lifestyle behaviour change in psoriasis patients? A qualitative study

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BACKGROUND: Psoriasis, a long-term inflammatory skin condition is associated with unhealthy behaviours which can trigger onset/flares and are known risk factors for cardiovascular disease. It is unknown whether health-care practitioners managing people with psoriasis are familiar with the role of lifestyle factors and lifestyle behaviour change (LBC) techniques, or are confident to incorporate this information into routine consultations. The study aimed to elicit practitioners’ views about addressing LBC in psoriasis patients.

METHODS: In-depth, qualitative interviews were carried out with 23 practitioners managing psoriasis patients in UK primary and secondary care, stratified by discipline. Interviews explored practitioners’ knowledge of and skills in LBC to support people with psoriasis and their attitudes to this work, including any perceived barriers. Data were analysed using Framework Analysis to identify key issues.

RESULTS: Practitioners viewed LBC as important in managing psoriasis but commonly believed such work was outside their role, citing obstacles such as organisational constraints and prioritisation of other goals. Data suggest that limited knowledge and skills about lifestyle factors in psoriasis underpinned these beliefs, resulting in LBC being rarely addressed in consultations.

CONCLUSIONS: This study identified low levels of knowledge, skills and confidence among professionals about addressing lifestyle issues in psoriasis patients and a lack of structured support in both primary and secondary care for this work. Findings will inform the development of training for staff and support materials to improve lifestyle in people with psoriasis.