Supporting lifestyle behaviour change for psoriasis patients: Assessing health professionals’ core training competencies

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Presented at the 7th International Congress of Psoriasis: from Gene to Clinic, London, UK, December 2014

BACKGROUND: People with psoriasis are likely to engage in unhealthy lifestyle behaviours including smoking, excess alcohol use and being overweight and sedentary. These are linked both to poorer psoriasis outcomes and are key risk factors for cardiovascular disease and diabetes. This should make lifestyle behaviour change (LBC) central to psoriasis management. Healthcare professionals managing psoriasis patients have the opportunity to support LBC but lack the confidence and skills to do so. Training in LBC methods should form part of the healthcare professional training curricula, however to date there has been no assessment of this.

AIM: We aimed to examine the content of core training competencies for general and dermatology-specialist healthcare professionals for evidence of training / education for skill development related to health promotion and LBC.

METHODS: Healthcare professional core training documents were obtained from the relevant professional bodies and explored using content analysis. NVivo qualitative data management software was used to systematically search the documents for content related to health promotion and LBC. A coding frame was used to categorise content into knowledge of LBC, behaviour change skills, and attitudes towards addressing LBC with patients in relation to healthcare professional role.

RESULTS: Of 11 documents analysed, 67 references to health promotion and LBC were discovered. These were found in the General Practitioner curriculum (n=42; 62.7%), followed by the Dermatology Specialist Nurse curriculum (n=14; 20.9%) and Dermatologist curriculum (n=11; 16.4%). LBC knowledge, skills relating to conducting LBC with patients and attitudes towards conducting LBC were not specified well, with only basic competencies included in the curricula.

CONCLUSION: Unhealthy lifestyle behaviours pose a significant health risk for psoriasis patients, however there is little on LBC in healthcare professionals’ core training competencies. This study raises the question of preparedness for practice and recommends significant changes to the existing curricula to incorporate evidence-based approaches to LBC. This would equip healthcare professionals who are well placed to support and facilitate LBC for psoriasis patients with the necessary knowledge about skills and attitudes towards LBC.