Clinicians’ readiness to support lifestyle behaviour change in people with psoriasis: A qualitative study

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BACKGROUND: Psoriasis is associated with unhealthy living known to affect onset/flares of the condition and to increase the risk for cardiovascular disease and diabetes. Whether clinicians managing people with psoriasis are confident to use lifestyle behaviour change (LBC) techniques in routine consultations was unknown. We aimed to elicit the views and attitudes of healthcare professionals in both primary and secondary care about addressing LBC with psoriasis patients.

METHODS: In-depth, qualitative interviews were carried out with 23 clinicians managing psoriasis patients in the UK stratified by discipline (seven dermatologists, six dermatology specialist nurses, five general practitioners with a special interest in dermatology and five general practitioners). Interviews explored professionals’ knowledge, skills and attitudes in relation to LBC, including perceived barriers. Data were analysed using Framework Analysis to identify key themes.

RESULTS: Practitioners viewed LBC as important in managing psoriasis but believed such work was outside their remit, citing organisational constraints and prioritisation of other goals such as diagnosis and medications management as barriers. However, limited knowledge about and skills in using LBC principles and techniques underpinned these beliefs, resulting in LBC being rarely addressed in consultations. Participants identified a need for training to support psoriasis patients with LBC.

CONCLUSION: We showed low levels of knowledge, skills and confidence among health professionals about addressing lifestyle in psoriasis patients. Findings have informed the development of training for staff and support materials for patients to improve lifestyle-related behaviour.