Can theory-based written resources improve illness coherence without increasing anxiety in people with psoriasis? Findings from the IMPACT patient intervention feasibility study.

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BACKGROUND: Psoriasis is a complex, relapsing-remitting, long-term inflammatory skin condition. Co-morbidities include psoriatic arthritis, metabolic syndrome, Crohn's disease, anxiety and depression. People with psoriasis often feel stigmatised, disengage from healthcare and find self-management challenging. Our team previously identified poor understanding amongst people with psoriasis about the relationships between psoriasis, co-morbidities, treatments and lifestyle behaviours. The challenge is to improve understanding of the condition and its comorbidities without increasing anxiety which is already high in this group.

AIMS: To broaden patient understanding of: psoriasis, pharmacological and behavioural treatments without increasing anxiety.

METHODS: Patient resources were designed in iterative phases by a) theory mapping concepts to components of the Self-Regulatory Model (SRM), b) modifications following collaboration with clinicians and patients and c) evaluation using validated and study specific questionnaires administered pre- and post- exposure to the materials. Participants were asked to identify specific content they perceived changed their understanding of psoriasis and/or management.

The resources addressed three areas: psoriasis as a long-term condition; medication management and lifestyle behaviours. Sixty-one people with psoriasis recruited from primary care participated.

RESULTS: Analyses of 47 patients (mean age 57: 55% female) indicated that illness coherence (IPQ-R domain) increased following engagement with the materials (t(45) = -3.67, p≤0.001) with a large effect size (eta² =0.23). 78.3% of participants reported their understanding of psoriasis had increased. Anxiety scores did not increase.

CONCLUSION: This feasibility study found some evidence to suggest that carefully designed theory-based written resources based upon the SRM improved illness understanding in people with psoriasis without corresponding increasing anxiety.