

Evaluation of patient experience of atopic dermatitis with a view of assessing whether life course impairment is cumulative



J. Wolf, M. Chin, R. Hext, A. Anstey

Academic Dermatology Unit, St Woolos Hospital, Newport, Wales

Background

Cumulative life course impairment (CLCI)¹ is a novel concept which investigates the effect of psoriasis and its psychosocial burden. This may result in sufferers not attaining their 'full life potential'. Atopic dermatitis (AD) also influences patients' psychosocial wellbeing, which puts them at risk of developing CLCI.

Methods

5 patients with severe AD were selected for in-depth interviews. We considered core components of CLCI such as burden of stigmatisation, physical and psychological comorbidities and external life factors. Data was collected on impact and burden of treatment, AD history and life milestones, such as childhood & adolescence, employment, relationships, hobbies, stigma and social support.

Conclusion

- CLCI is a useful assessment tool for chronic skin conditions
- It should be used to assess patients with long-term disease in order to identify at risk patients
- 'Education and employment' should be included as separate entities
- More longitudinal data is needed

Results

All patients interviewed showed varying degrees of CLCI. 4 out of 5 demonstrated mental health problems and feelings of stigmatisation.

"The kids in school said I had lizard skin – I still don't like people taking my photo"

Education and employment were influenced significantly in 3 cases.

"I wanted to work in the public sector but people avoid people who look like this"

Difficulties in forming relationships were reported in 3 cases.

"No woman would ever want to look at someone like me"

One patient did not demonstrate CLCI, which can be attributed to patient factors and strong social support. All others felt that their life course had been significantly altered by AD.

