

ETERNAL HEALTH

CONDITION OF THE WEEK

Psoriasis update

1 in 50 people suffer from psoriasis and this disease can be mentally and physically debilitating.

Medical treatments are primarily agents that are used on the skin including steroid creams, vitamin D-like agents, vitamin A derivatives, potions that are known as calcineurin inhibitors, that go by the generic names of tacrolimus and pimecrolimus, which can be quite effective, as well as a substance called anthralin made from the bark of the South American araroba tree.

For those with very severe psoriasis that is not amenable to topical treatments, drugs that modulate and sometimes suppress the immune system are used. Recently what is known as 'biological response modifying' drugs, that are administered by injection have been incorporated.

With regard to natural treatments, studies show that a gluten-free diet, alcohol abstinence and achieving optimal blood sugar control with a low-calorie diet can be beneficial. Gluten is found in wheat, rye, oats and barley.

Supplementation with selenium, co-enzyme Q10-50mg per day and vitamin E-50mg per day in combination, was found to facilitate rapid clearing of psoriatic skin lesions.

Vitamin B12 taken orally or via injection, as well as in skin creams, has been found to be effective.

Agents that are derived from vitamin A can be highly effective but their side-effect profile results in a significant downside. A new class of agents called the retinoic acid metabolism-blocking agents are being trialed in an attempt to limit the harmful effects of the vitamin A analogues. Liarozole and rambazole are two such drugs, with trials showing that by increasing the presence of vitamin A, significant improvements can be achieved.

The benefits of fish oil are mixed with some studies suggesting supplements can be helpful while others don't.