

Experts turn to web to combat distressing skin disease

March 23 2009

People experiencing the skin disease psoriasis may get relief from their symptoms and the psychological distress they can cause through a new web-based therapy programme.

Skin experts and psychologists at The University of Manchester have teamed up to design a computer program known as ‘electronic Targeted Intervention for [Psoriasis](#)’ or eTIPS to help sufferers cope with and manage their condition better.

“Psoriasis is a [skin disease](#) that usually appears as patches of raised, red skin anywhere on the body and is believed to be related to faulty signals sent to [skin cells](#) by the body’s immune system,” said Dr Christine Bundy, senior lecturer in psychological medicine and a member of the research team.

“The condition affects between two and three per cent of the UK population and can have an effect on the way people think and feel about themselves, as well as how to cope with day to day life.

“Psychological discomfort is made worse by the visible nature of the condition and people may feel reluctant to expose parts of their body affected with psoriasis, often covering up with long sleeves, trousers and polo necks.

“Psoriasis has been known to affect people’s work, relationships and the activities they do, leading to [anxiety](#), [stress](#), worry, low self-esteem and

difficulties with coping.”

The eTIPS study, funded by the Psoriasis Research Trust and supported by the Psoriasis and Psoriatic Arthritis Alliance ([PAPAA](#)), will ask participants to complete up to four web-based questionnaires over a six week period with a further follow-up questionnaire at six months.

The programme is based on cognitive behaviour therapy - a successful [psychological treatment](#) that helps individuals understand that the way they think about a situation can affect the way they feel and behave.

“The programme will be delivered online so that it is widely available and can reach out to individuals who may not wish to discuss psychological complaints face-to-face,” said Dr Bundy.

“Another benefit of using the internet is that participants can take part at their own convenience and in the privacy of their own home, working at their own pace.”

The trial is open to individuals aged 16 and over who have been diagnosed with plaque psoriasis and have internet access. The study will run until December 2009.

For further information visit the PAPAA website www.papaa.org/ .

Provided by University of Manchester

Citation: Experts turn to web to combat distressing skin disease (2009, March 23) retrieved 19 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2009-03-experts-web-combat-distressing-skin.html>

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