

Psoriatic arthritis patients need better screening, warns panel of experts

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Leading experts have joined together for the first time to call for better screening of psoriatic arthritis to help millions of people worldwide suffering from the condition.

Psoriatic arthritis (PsA) causes painful joint inflammation and can cause irreversible joint damage if left untreated.

PsA tends to affect people with the skin condition psoriasis, which causes a red, scaly rash, and affects approximately two per cent of people in the UK.

Around one in five go on to develop PsA – usually within ten years of the initial skin problem being diagnosed.

Coming together to tackle the gaps in the treatment and diagnosis of psoriatic [arthritis](#), expert rheumatologists, dermatologists and patient representatives from Europe and North America formed the Psoriatic Arthritis Forum, and have now made a series of recommendations to combat the condition.

The recommendations were published the journal *Arthritis Care and Research*.

They included:

- Developing a screening tool for dermatologists and primary care doctors to identify suspected PsA patients
- Raising awareness about the progression, health-related quality of life components, and other health issues associated with PsA
- Improving communication between healthcare providers and patients

Dr Philip Helliwell, of the School of Medicine at the University of Leeds, a member of the Psoriatic Arthritis Forum, said:

"We believe up to 50% of psoriasis patients with [psoriatic arthritis](#) are undiagnosed, living with sore, stiff and tender joints, without understanding what is causing this pain. Our review points the way forward for effective screening and treatment, in the hope that detection rates of the condition are improved and patients enjoy a better quality of life."

In addition to better screening, experts have called for improved referrals of patients, as well as an algorithm – a step-by-step procedure for primary care physicians - to be developed to help community physicians on patient evaluation and treatment decisions.

Dr Helliwell added: "These recommendations serve as a guide for improving the timely diagnosis of PsA, as well as promoting global awareness of PsA. We need to develop better screening tools as a matter of urgency, as these will be cost-effective and lead to better health outcomes for thousands of people."

Provided by University of Leeds

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