

# The search for prognostic markers and treatment options for cutaneous lymphoma

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16th World Congress on Cancers of the Skin starts on Wednesday in the Wiener Hofburg. Credit: Medical University of Vienna

Primary cutaneous lymphomas, cancers of the lymphatic system, occur in the skin and originate either from T-lymphocytes (T-cell lymphomas, incidence 75 percent) or in B-cell lymphocytes (B-cell lymphomas, 25 percent). Lymphocytes are cells of the blood system. This is a rare disease of ultimately unknown causation. Every year there are 6 – 8 new cases for every million people. MedUni Vienna is simultaneously conducting several studies relating to this disease with the aim of identifying prognostic markers for the course of the disease and also generally improving the quality of life and survival rate of those affected.

"In the early stage of the [disease](#), the prognosis is excellent and normal life expectancy is hardly affected," explains Constanze Jonak of MedUni Vienna's Department of Dermatology. "But when the disease is advanced, the 5-year survival rate drops to 0 to 39 percent and the disease is terminal." Cutaneous lymphoma is always associated with symptoms of severe itching and skin rashes and, in the advanced stage, can lead

to skin tumours and erythroderma ("red man syndrome"). The cutaneous symptoms of this disease can be disfiguring. Existing treatments are limited and, in any case, are only effective in the short term.

In a recent study, MedUni Vienna researchers were able to confirm prognostic markers for the disease and they are also taking part in the largest ever international study to establish a prognostic index for cutaneous lymphomas.

They also documented the longest after-care periods for patients with cutaneous B-cell lymphomas ever studied, using the antibody Rituximab (an antibody against the protein CD20), which targets surface markers on B-cells and brings about the destruction of the lymphoma cells. Jonak: "The treatment was very successful in the majority of patients. Recurrences were quite common but patients responded to the therapy once more.

In another project currently being conducted at MedUni Vienna's Department of Dermatology, cutaneous lymphoma patients are being surveyed regarding their quality of life and, for the first time, regarding their "perception of the disease" and "experience of the disease, their own personal experience and how they cope with this disease and the results are being analysed.

Provided by Medical University of Vienna

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