Psoriasis Research Issue Brief

The National Psoriasis Foundation exists to find a cure for psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis and to eliminate their devastating effects through research, advocacy and education. The Foundation is the largest psoriasis patient advocacy organization and charitable funder of psoriatic disease research worldwide. The Foundation assists approximately 1.5 million people annually through educational programs and services. Psoriasis, the most prevalent autoimmune disease in the nation, is a noncontagious, chronic, inflammatory, painful, disfiguring and disabling disease for which there is no cure. It is often accompanied by psoriatic arthritis, a specific form of arthritis that is painful and debilitating and causes joint damage. Psoriasis appears on the skin, most often as red, scaly patches that itch, can bleed and requires sophisticated medical care. Current studies indicate that the prevalence of psoriasis in the United States ranges between two and three percent, affecting approximately 7.5 million Americans.1

Psoriasis is connected with an elevated risk for other serious, chronic and life-threatening conditions, including cardiovascular disease,2 diabetes,3 stroke4 and cancer.5 People with psoriasis also experience higher rates of depression and anxiety, and people with severe psoriasis die four years younger, on average, than people without the disease. 7 The economic consequences of psoriasis, both for individuals and the health care system, are significant. In a 2012 study, annual U.S. per capita healthcare and out-of-pocket costs for individuals with psoriasis exceeded those for individuals without psoriasis. In 2012 national annual estimates of total direct medical expenses for psoriasis were $5.17 billion and annual estimates of out-of-pocket expense for psoriasis were $1.49 billion.8 People with severe psoriasis are significantly more likely to be considered “low-income” than those with mild disease and to report that psoriasis is the reason they are not working.9

The National Psoriasis Foundation maintains a strong commitment to engaging in efforts to secure and protect federal funding for public policies and programs to achieve a cure, make progress toward better treatments and end health insurance practices that are harmful to people with psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis. People with psoriasis would benefit greatly from the development of effective, safe and affordable therapies, which could potentially be identified through continued federal commitment to—and investment in—clinical, translational and basic research focused on understanding the immunology and genetics of psoriatic disease. Given the billions of dollars in annual cost to governments, businesses and individuals living with psoriasis, a greater federal investment in psoriasis research can yield significant savings for affected individuals and entities.

On February 12, 2013, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released the first-ever public health agenda designed to address psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis. The agenda, entitled “Developing and Addressing the Public Health Agenda for Psoriasis and Psoriatic Arthritis,” was developed by CDC in collaboration with clinical, biomedical, and public health experts. This ground-breaking report, and an accompanying article published in the American Journal of Preventative Medicine, highlights the gaps in psoriatic disease research that must be addressed if we are going to understand how psoriatic disease affects the population as a whole.

In Fiscal Year (FY) 2014, the National Psoriasis Foundation urges Congress to support the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the implementation of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) research agenda on psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis. Specifically, the Foundation calls on Congress to:

- Support the implementation of the CDC’s psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis public health agenda, by allocating $1.2 million in the FY2014 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies (LHHS) Appropriations bill to implement a public health agenda for psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis at the CDC’s National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS).
- Maintain funding for the NIH institutes and centers. Within the NIH, the NIAMS mission includes researching many of the chronic, costly and devastating diseases facing Americans, such as psoriasis. NIAMS, bearing the main responsibility for psoriasis research within NIH, is to be commended for having helped achieve several paradigm shifts and breakthroughs in psoriasis research.
- Encourage a process among and between NIH institutes and centers to guide and coordinate now disparate research efforts. This will optimize federal research investments and ensure that discoveries are applied across common goals that complement and advance the understanding of causes, treatments and cures for both psoriasis and its comorbid conditions.
References


