

How Dermatologists are Making it Easier to Treat Skin Cancers with Science and Education

NEW YORK, NY, UNITED STATES, March 9, 2021 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Patients with conditions that require ongoing, regular treatment, such as heart disease and diabetes, rely on not only effective medications, but also need to regularly take their medication to control their disease. This theory also applies to treatment of skin conditions, such as actinic keratosis, a pre-cancer

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Justin W. Marson, MD

that usually occurs in older, lighter-skin people after years of sun exposure or extended occupational exposure to certain chemicals.

Dermatologists often treat these pre-cancers in the office before they have a chance of growing into larger cancers such as squamous cell carcinomas. However, the presence of one actinic keratosis usually means there are 10 more hiding that need to be treated. Treatments that are prescribed by dermatologists that patients can apply

themselves at home are very effective to treating these hidden pre-cancers, but can also cause prolonged redness, crusting, and potentially pain and itching. These “sun-burn”-like side effects can dissuade many patients from pursuing future treatments. According to a new study published in SKIN, the Journal of Cutaneous Medicine, there are new medications and methods that dermatologists are employing to improve the chances that patients can successfully complete these therapies.

Justin W. Marson, MD, lead author on the study found that there are several factors that affect how well patients stick to and follow a treatment plan including: how long a patient has to use a medication, how often they have to apply it, how complex the instructions are and how severe or long-lasting the side effects, such as skin irritation, may be. According to Dr. Marson, “Studies have shown that patients have a harder time sticking to longer treatment plans and may even accept less effective treatments to minimize discomfort.”

Fortunately, newer medications can potentially address many of these barriers. For example, a new topical medication, tirbanibulin, has a novel ability to selectively kill cancer cells. This may lead to better targeting of the pre-cancer spots and to less redness or crusting on normal skin. Studies have shown that after just 5 days of once a day treatments, almost half of patients that used tirbanibulin had all their treated pre-cancer spots disappear. Also importantly, any patient that experienced “sun-burn” like side effects were much milder and and and did not last as long

as the pain and redness caused by other current prescription treatments on the market.

The authors also point out that how dermatologists tell information to their patients is very important. Although an 80% chance of a good outcome and a 20% chance of a bad outcome theoretically carry the same message, studies have shown that emphasizing the outcome showing a future risk exists can lead to patients being more likely to use the treatment. "The same information given to a patient in a way that minimizes the risk can have a real effect on a patient's choice to treat or not to treat," says Dr. Marson. "That's why it's important that dermatologists counsel patients that each of these pre-cancers does have a very real chance to turn into something more sinister."

The authors conclude that advances in our understanding of these pre-cancer spots and treatment options can empower both dermatologists and patients by making it easier to stick to a treatment plan and potentially improve longer-term outcomes for skin cancer.

SKIN: The Journal of Cutaneous Medicine® is a peer-reviewed online medical journal that is the official journal of The National Society for Cutaneous Medicine. The mission of SKIN is to provide an enhanced and accelerated route to disseminate new dermatologic knowledge for all aspects of cutaneous disease.

For more details please visit www.jofskin.org or contact jofskin@gmail.com.

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