

Prioritising research questions and reducing uncertainties in the treatment of people with eczema

The Centre of Evidence Based Dermatology has received funding from the National Institute of Health Research for 5 years to conduct research into several skin diseases, including eczema.

As part of this grant, Helen Nankervis is working on updating an important systematic review of clinical trials (www.ncchta.org/execsumm/summ437.htm) conducted nine years ago which covers all treatments for atopic eczema. This will help to bring together all the up to date, good quality evidence about each different treatment for eczema and identify areas where future research could be directed. She will also be creating a database of information from all the clinical trials on eczema treatment. This will be freely available to the public, with the aim of helping researchers trying to answer specific questions about eczema treatment in the future (for example by writing a systematic review).

Helen will then facilitate a James Lind Alliance (www.lindalliance.org) prioritisation exercise for eczema treatment, which aims to collect as many of the unanswered questions about the treatment of eczema as possible from patients, consumers, clinicians, health professionals and carers. These unanswered questions will be prioritised by representatives from all the interested parties to produce a list of the top 10 unanswered questions about eczema treatment. This will then help to direct future eczema research.

Helen will also be developing patient decision aids. These can help a patient and clinician (such as a dermatologist) come to a difficult treatment decision based on the current evidence about each treatment option. Plain language summaries of systematic reviews of eczema treatment will also be written, in order to make them as widely accessible as possible.

If you are interested in learning more about this research, you can email Helen.nankervis@nottingham.ac.uk