

## **Protocol**

### **Study title: Improving recognition of skin conditions in primary care**

Background: In the UK, there are over 2000 skin conditions that people can be diagnosed with, and one in four people consult their GP about a skin problem. On the other hand, medical students in the UK receive on average only 2 weeks of dermatology training. Furthermore, out of a total of 40,000 GPs, there are only about 250 GPs with an extended role in dermatology. Healthcare professionals (HCP) such as practice nurses, physician associates and paramedic practitioners sometimes see people with skin conditions and make diagnoses with only one to two weeks of training in dermatology. Therefore, for the 'typical' GP and HCP, it is difficult to recognise many important skin conditions and manage their patients correctly. People with skin conditions can be misdiagnosed and as such managed incorrectly or have a delay in diagnosis leading to worse symptoms and the subsequent need for more aggressive treatment. Advice and Guidance does help GPs with obtaining diagnoses from dermatologists however this service is currently overstretched (30,000 requests a year for dermatology in England) and responses to requests varies by geographical location.

Therefore, there is a need to determine which skin conditions GPs and HCPs in a primary care setting would like support with in order to improve recognition of skin conditions and/or decisions about referral to a dermatologist and therefore better outcome for patients and savings for the NHS.

This study is unfunded preliminary research which will lead to funding applications to the NIHR (see other document for research funding plan).

Study design: Cross-sectional survey in the UK

Aim: To determine what support GPs and HCPs across the UK need with regards to recognising skin conditions in a primary care setting.

Methods: A survey will be sent to weekly bulletins distributed by regional research development networks and local integrated care boards and relevant social media such as a national Facebook site for GPs. The survey will be anonymous. We will determine the skin conditions GPs and HCPs are less confident in recognising and what support they would like, if indeed they require support. The skin conditions listed have been chosen by dermatologists and GPs.

Dissemination plans: We plan to publish the results in a peer-reviewed scientific journal and present our findings at a national conference. The Primary Care Dermatology Society and patient support groups will help us share our findings with relevant healthcare professionals and members of the public. Following the findings of this study, we plan to apply for funding to carry out research which will lead to either a tool or educational package to support GPs and HCPs in the recognition of skin conditions in primary care.

Link to survey: [https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=as2-rtQxAUuVzoJ0r-hT2cr0YL\\_Wi9Jl4BJt5lnXOIUOEpiJT0lSOFPuOFRMWjhOQVE5RExNWTdDNy4u](https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=as2-rtQxAUuVzoJ0r-hT2cr0YL_Wi9Jl4BJt5lnXOIUOEpiJT0lSOFPuOFRMWjhOQVE5RExNWTdDNy4u)