PSORIASIS AS A PSYCHOPHYSIOLOGICAL DISEASE

Valentina Saint-Georges
Clinical Hospital Centre
Department of Dermatovenereology
Rijeka, Croatia
PSORIASIS

DEFINITION:

• inflammatory erythro-squamous chronic disease marked by periods of exacerbations and remissions affecting skin, scalp, nails and joints

• classified as a psychosomatic disease with a genetic predisposition

• worldwide incidence of 1-3%
COMMON CLINICAL PICTURE

Psoriasis vulgaris: erythro-squamous plaques
COMMON CLINICAL PICTURE
Psoriatic Arthritis
ETIOPATHOGENESIS OF PSORIASIS

- multifactorial disease presumed to be genetically conditioned
- classified as a psycho-physiological disease
- environmental, psychological, and immunological factors can trigger the onset and/or exacerbation
- a defective hypothalamo-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis response to psychological stress may lead to immune dysregulation which ultimately creates inflammation and autoimmunity in adulthood
# PSORIASIS AS A PSYCHOPHYSIOLOGICAL DISEASE IN A MALE PATIENT

## Patient History

### Physical Diseases
- 68-year old male patient
- Arterial hypertension (50yrs of age)
- Spondyloarthritis (55yrs of age)
- Psoriasis vulgaris (58yrs of age)
- Diabetes Mellitus Type 2 (63yrs of age)

### Psychological Factors
- Anxiety
- Alexithymia
- PTSD as a result of living through civil war
PATIENT BEFORE TREATMENT

- patient has frequently recurring psoriatic flares and severe anxiety, believed to be caused by exposure to traumatic stressors
- lack of emotional regulation manifests in the form of skin and joint symptoms
- numerous psychosomatic diseases were long-standing along with family predisposition
According to a study conducted by Dr. E. Simonić and colleagues at the Clinical Medical Centre in Rijeka, Croatia, childhood and adulthood negative life events coupled with the lack of positive experiences could increase the vulnerability for psoriasis onset.

PATIENT AFTER TREATMENT

**TREATMENT PLAN**
- adding a sedative component to his anti-hypertensive therapy
- local corticosteroid application on affected skin
- neutral cream application on and around affected skin
- all other long-standing systemic therapy for his co-morbidities remained unaltered

**PATIENT OUTCOME**
- further benefit would come from psychologist-led support to deal with psychosocial aspects influencing his overall physical health
- current therapy has significantly improved the symptoms associated with psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis
THIS CASE HIGHLIGHTS

- Traumatic experiences may be broad spectrum risk factors influencing risks of multiple chronic physical diseases in later life.

- Hereditary factors in combination with childhood traumatic events might be important risk factors for developing psoriatic arthritis.

- Cutaneous psoriatic patients who have endured negative life events are more likely to develop psoriatic arthritis in later life, along with other chronic autoimmune inflammatory diseases.

- Psychological distress may contribute to a variety of disorders in psoriatic patients - such as psoriatic arthritis.

- Patients with psoriasis show higher alexithymia, implying that lack of emotional regulation may lead to the phenomena that painful emotions are primarily experienced in the form of skin and joint symptoms.

- A combined and individually adjusted therapy, together with a psychotherapeutic approach may lead to a long-lasting success in treating psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis.

THANK YOU