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A single-center, open-label study assessing the effect of Goeckerman therapy on quality of life and psychosocial well-being in patients with moderate-to-severe psoriasis and eczema

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Background: Psoriasis and eczema are chronic inflammatory skin conditions with a direct negative impact on a patient's psychological and social well-being. This can result in depression, anxiety, and a significant decrease in quality of life (QoL). Patients may develop poor self-esteem and embarrassment secondary to the symptoms and disfigurement associated with the disease. Goeckerman therapy is a treatment regimen for eczema and psoriasis using a combination of crude coal tar and ultraviolet radiation. Patients are treated daily until they exhibit significant improvement, as determined by the treating physician. Here we present interim results of a prospective study assessing the impact of Goeckerman therapy on QoL in patients with moderate-to-severe psoriasis and eczema using both skin- and nonskin-specific, QoL and psychological well-being psychometric instruments.

Methods: Thirty consecutive patients with either psoriasis or eczema who presented to the UCSF Psoriasis Center for Goeckerman therapy received questionnaires consisting of the Dermatology Life Quality Index (DLQI), Psychological General Well Being Index (PGWB). Skin assessment and questionnaires were completed on the first and last day of treatment.

Results: The study will enroll a total of 30 subjects. The first 10 subjects have completed the study. Interim results show that patients experience significant improvement in quality of life as measured by a change in psychometric instrument score before and after treatment. 100% of psoriasis patients achieved PASI-75, and 100% of eczema patients demonstrated a 75% improvement in SCORAD. These patients demonstrated improvement of their PGWB to an average score comparable to that of the general population.

Conclusion: Patients with untreated moderate-to-severe plaque type psoriasis or chronic, severe eczema have as much impairment as patients with other major medical diseases, including breast cancer, congestive heart failure, and diabetes. Our interim results reveal that with effective treatment of psoriasis and eczema, patients can experience improvement of their QoL and psychological well-being.

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