

Experts and MPs call for improved access to treatment.

MPs gathered at the House of Commons in April as experts and patient groups urged members of parliament to lobby for improved access to treatment for patients with psoriatic arthritis.

The Rt. Hon Bruce George MP, Chairman of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Skin and Baroness Masham of Ilton, Chair of the Psoriasis Association were among those speaking at the event, which is hoped will help raise the profile of the disease, its impact on patients' quality of life and the importance of improved access to anti-TNF agents for those that are eligible for treatment.

Psoriatic arthritis is a disease of younger adults and affects approximately 23% of those with psoriasis¹ putting estimates as high as 276,000 people in the UK with the disease.² A serious condition which causes severe morbidity, with impairments in quality of life similar to those of

ischaemic heart disease, asthma or diabetes, psoriatic arthritis is also associated with increased mortality.³

The Rt Hon. Bruce George commented, "Psoriatic arthritis can have a profound impact on peoples' lives, they are essentially living with the burden of two conditions; with arthritis they have to cope with issues of physical disability and with psoriasis the issues of having a serious skin condition." David Chandler of the Psoriatic Arthropathy Alliance who has psoriatic arthritis gave an insight into living with the disease at the briefing and commented, "It took me ten years from the onset of my symptoms before I was given an accurate diagnosis. Although things are better now than they were, there is still a long way to go in terms of raising peoples' awareness of this disease, and ensuring that quality of patient care isn't lost between what are two distinct specialities - Rheumatology and Dermatology."

Giving the clinician's perspective, Bruce Kirkham, Consultant

Rheumatologist at Guy's and St Thomas' Hospital, London shared his clinical experience of treating patients. He comments, "Until now we have only been able to offer patients with psoriatic arthritis treatments such as non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) or methotrexate. For patients who fail to respond to these treatments due to their limitations from lack of efficacy or side effects we are now, after many years of waiting for effective treatments, able to offer anti-TNF drugs which can make a real difference and help them live a normal life. This emphasizes the importance of patient access to specialist services and treatments."

References

1. <http://www.psoriasis.org/facts/psa/> (accessed on 04.04.05)
2. Report on the Enquiry into the Impact of Skin Diseases on People's Lives. All Parliamentary Group on Skin. July 2003
3. Wong K, Gladman DD, Husted J, Long JA, Farewell VT. Arthritis Rheum. 1997 Oct; 40 (10): 1868-72



David Chandler, Dr. Bruce Kirkham, Baroness Masham of Ilton, Rt Hon. Bruce George