Information for GPs: Managing cardiovascular disease in patients with severe psoriasis
Summary:

1. Psoriasis must be thought of as a **systemic inflammatory disease**.

2. Growing evidence suggests that **severe** psoriasis is a significant independent risk factor for cardiovascular disease (both heart attacks and strokes), and may confer a risk similar in size to that of diabetes mellitus$^1$.

3. Therefore, patients with psoriasis, particularly those with severe disease as defined below, should be considered a **high risk group** with regards to their cardiovascular risk.

4. Risk factors in patients with severe psoriasis should be **proactively** managed.

Who is at risk?

- This cardiovascular risk is greatest in patients with severe psoriasis, defined as:
  - A PASI (Psoriasis Area Severity Index) score of 10 or more
  - Psoriatic arthritis
  - Psoriasis requiring systemic oral medication.

How big is the risk?

- The risk of cardiovascular disease associated with severe psoriasis appears to be similar in magnitude to that conferred by **diabetes mellitus**$^1$.

Suggestions:

1. There is no conclusive evidence that aggressive systemic management with psoriatic medications reduces the risk of cardiovascular disease in these patients.

2. Whilst patients with mild psoriasis also have increased risks, the risk is greatest in those patients with severe psoriasis (defined above).
3. We advocate **proactive/aggressive identification** and **management** of existing cardiovascular risk factors in this patient group as per existing guidelines of the management of cardiovascular disease in primary care (BP, diabetes, smoking, cholesterol, lifestyle).

4. We suggest an **annual review and consideration** of CV risk factors in patients with severe or psoriatic arthritis.

### Evidence summary:

- Large population-based cohort studies have demonstrated that psoriasis patients have increased mortality, largely due to increased cardiovascular disease. In one population-based study of 37,000 patients with psoriasis and 4 million controls, the rate ratio of cardiovascular death in patients with mild and severe psoriasis was 1.14 (1.06-1.22) and 1.57 (1.27 - 1.94) respectively.

- Relative to controls without psoriasis, younger patients with severe psoriasis were at the greatest risk for cardiovascular death (rate ratio 2.98, 95% confidence intervals 1.32-6.73). This has been demonstrated in further studies of cardiovascular mortality and specifically myocardial infarction.

- Psoriasis patients have more conventional cardiovascular risk factors (dyslipidaemia, diabetes, hypertension, smoking, metabolic syndrome) than patients without psoriasis. These risk factors increase in prevalence and severity with the severity of the psoriasis.

- However, the risk of cardiovascular disease in psoriasis patients is above and beyond that which is accounted for by conventional risk factors, suggesting that psoriasis itself is a significant independent risk factor for cardiovascular disease.
Key references


