

# Access to care for people with psoriatic disease

People with psoriatic disease should have access to comprehensive, accessible, affordable, individually adapted treatment, including early diagnosis, routine screening and professional medical care. Yet, this is not always the case. There are various reasons why a person may not get the treatment and care they need at the time they require it. These reasons include, among others, how the healthcare system is set up and operates, the geographical location or distribution of health services, the availability or affordability of medicines or treatments, the policies in place, or because personal factors such as stigma or shame prevent them from seeking care.

## THE UNIVERSAL HEALTH COVERAGE AGENDA

Access to care for people with psoriatic disease is a critical concern. It is especially relevant as part of the Universal Health Coverage (UHC) agenda and global health goals for achieving UHC. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines UHC as a situation where “all individuals and communities receive the health services they need without suffering financial hardship.”<sup>1</sup> UHC aims to ensure that everyone has access to quality healthcare services, including early detection, prevention, treatment, rehabilitation, and palliative care.

## THE CHALLENGES

Adequate access to care for individuals with psoriatic disease is essential for improving wellbeing and quality of life. However, several challenges may hinder the provision of appropriate care for people living with psoriatic disease within the UHC framework:

### Delayed diagnosis or misdiagnosis

Early diagnosis and prompt treatment are crucial for managing psoriatic disease effectively.<sup>2</sup> Factors that may delay diagnosis or lead to misdiagnosis include:

**Limited awareness and understanding:** Both among the general public and healthcare providers, there may be misconceptions and a lack of knowledge about psoriatic

disease, its symptoms, and the associated comorbidities. This can result in delayed diagnosis and suboptimal treatment.<sup>3,4</sup>

**Cultural issues:** Bias and/or stigma within a person’s culture or community that may prevent or delay an individual with psoriatic disease from seeking a diagnosis and treatment.<sup>5</sup>

**Healthcare professional capabilities:** Inexperience of healthcare professionals at the primary care level with identifying and diagnosing psoriatic disease.<sup>3</sup>

### Inequitable or restricted access to healthcare

Access to and availability of affordable services and medicines within a reasonable distance are essential for a person living with psoriatic disease.

**Access to specialized care:** Psoriatic disease often requires specialized care from dermatologists, rheumatologists, or other healthcare professionals with expertise in managing the condition and its comorbidities. However, there may be a shortage of such professionals, particularly in resource-limited settings, leading to inadequate care and management of the disease.<sup>6,7</sup>

**Healthcare system barriers:** How the health system is organized, policies, the referral system, or infrastructure may make it difficult for people with psoriatic disease to access specialized care.<sup>8</sup>

### Limited, access, availability, or high cost of care and treatment

Psoriatic disease is a chronic disease that requires long-term treatment to help manage the condition.

**Cost of care and treatments:** People with psoriatic disease have more health expenses, for example, pay for nursing care out-of-pocket.<sup>9</sup> Many of the treatments for psoriatic disease, such as biological therapies, can be expensive.<sup>10</sup> If these treatments are not covered or only partially covered by health insurance or government-funded programs, they may be inaccessible to many people with psoriatic disease, leading to disparities in care.<sup>11</sup>

**Holistic management of comorbidities:** As psoriatic disease is associated with various comorbidities, comprehensive care addressing these related health issues and access to affordable medications is vital.<sup>1</sup> However, integrating services and coordinating care among different healthcare providers can be challenging, especially in settings with limited resources.<sup>5,13</sup>

### Stigma and discrimination

Psoriatic disease can cause visible lesions or patches on a person's face, neck, arms, legs, or other body areas that can be hard to cover up, causing discrimination in social settings or at work.

Doctors or nurses may have negative attitudes towards individuals with psoriatic disease, leading to less-than-optimal diagnosis and care.

Family members, friends or community members may have misconceptions or shame someone with psoriatic disease, causing mental distress.<sup>5</sup>

## PRIORITY ASKS

**Increase awareness of psoriatic disease among healthcare professionals,** especially primary care physicians.

**Develop guidelines and protocols for diagnosing and managing psoriatic disease,** including recommendations for early diagnosis, routine screening, and appropriate, adequate and timely treatment.

**Address healthcare system challenges preventing equitable access to treatment and care.**

**Improve access to all therapies,** including biologic therapies and other advanced treatments for psoriatic disease, reducing barriers to reimbursement and increasing the availability of these therapies in Asia.

## References

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## IFPA FORUM ASIA THEME BRIEFS

This background document has been produced to provide an overview of one of the four themes that will be explored at the IFPA Forum Asia 2023. The four themes prioritized by IFPA patient association members in Asia are Access to care, Addressing and managing comorbidities, Mental health, and the Social and familial impact of psoriatic disease.



## IFPA

Founded in 1971, IFPA is the international federation of psoriatic disease associations. We are the psoriatic disease community. Our members represent over 60 million people living with psoriatic disease. Together, we advocate for a future where all people living with psoriatic disease enjoy good health and wellbeing, free from stigma and preventable disability and comorbidities.

## PsorAsia

Founded in 2012, PsorAsia is a regional organization in the Asia Pacific for psoriatic disease associations. PsorAsia is the regional arm of IFPA, and they represent the interests of millions of people living with psoriatic disease in the region.