Therapeutic Patient Education (TPE) in Atopic Dermatitis (AD): A Position Paper from the International Eczema Council (IEC)

**BACKGROUND**

TPE has proven valuable in the management of chronic diseases where adherence to therapy is suboptimal by increasing knowledge of the disease, aligning patient and provider goals, and promoting trust. Research has shown positive effects on the disease course, prevention of complications, and patient autonomy and QOL. Topical therapies are the mainstay for patients with AD, but adherence is low for reasons such as fear of corticosteroids (‘corticophobia’). Ensuring that patients receive adequate therapy, and benefit from skin care interventions, requires the effective exchange of skills and knowledge between patients and HCPs. TPE can provide that exchange.

**OBJECTIVE**

Explore experts’ opinions and practices to determine if TPE is recommended and effective for treating AD

**METHODS**

- **Survey**
  - 82 IEC Councilors and Associates responded to the survey
  - Respondent demographics:
    - 51% Response rate
    - 98% Agree TPE should play an important role in persistent, refractory AD.
    - 83% Believed all patients, regardless of AD severity, could benefit.
    - 80% TPE tools
      - Provide tools to patients/caregivers (eg, handouts, videos).
      - Many also provide materials to other HCPs.

- **Propositions**
  - Specialist dermatologic nurses could lead for TPE.
  - Specialists are developing online programs to deliver TPE.
  - TPE training sessions (TPE Day).

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- **Context**
  - Many messages communicated by multiple HCPs (including pharmacists) can confuse patients and lead to “corticophobia”.
  - General information is often counterproductive. It is imperative to begin education with information specific to a patient’s problems.

- **Outcome assessment**
  - Regularly use formal physician assessment (eg, SCORing AD).
  - All respondents agreed TPE can improve patient care/satisfaction.

- **Conclusions**
  - TPE is increasingly proposed as a way to increase treatment adherence, avoid treatment failure, and improve patient QOL.

**RESULTS**

- **Survey results and subjects discussed**
  - 80% of 82 IEC Councilors and Associates responded to the survey
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IEC experts who responded to and discussed a survey concluded that TPE can improve the quality of care and patient satisfaction with care, but there is much to be done compared with advances in TPE for other chronic conditions. TPE approaches depend on the clinical setting, the organization of a country’s health services, and socioeconomic and cultural factors.