



Grant and Fellowships Program

More than Skin Deep: Mental Health

Request for Applications

According to the 2019 National Psoriasis Foundation Annual survey, 20.7 percent of survey respondents (N = 1507) diagnosed with psoriatic disease suffered from moderate-severe depression based on the widely used mental health assessment, the PhQ-9 screenerⁱ. Other studies estimated 16.5% of individuals with psoriatic disease experience symptoms of moderate-severe depressionⁱⁱ. These results are compared with a 7.1 percent prevalence of moderate-severe depression in the general population of the United States, according to the NIHⁱⁱⁱ. Of those meeting the criteria for moderate-severe depression in the 2019 NPF Annual Survey, 34.4 percent had never been diagnosed with depression.

There are fewer studies investigating the prevalence of anxiety among people with psoriasis. Reported rates range from 1.81% to 22.7% of people with psoriasis, compared with 1.35% to 11.1% of people without the disease.^{iv} Anxiety is slightly elevated in psoriasis patients compared with people with other dermatologic diseases.^v

People with psoriatic disease are also at increased risk for suicidality, which includes suicidal ideation, suicide attempts, and completed suicide. A systematic review of 18 studies found that patients with psoriasis were twice as likely to consider suicide as people without psoriasis.^{vi} Patients with psoriasis had a 32% higher likelihood of attempting suicide than people without psoriasis and a 20% higher likelihood of completing suicide than people without psoriasis.^{vii} Younger patients and patients with severe psoriasis have an elevated risk for suicidality.^{viii}

Stigmatization may also exacerbate self-perception, avoidance behaviors, negative emotions, and maladaptive thought processes leading to increased instance of depression, anxiety, and other affective disorders. A recently published report entitled “Mental Health and Skin Disease” showed stigmatization, discrimination and a lack of social acceptance and understanding is experienced daily for some. Experiences of stigmatization and intrusive reactions from others can contribute to avoidance behavior and feelings of isolation.^{ix}

These data suggest mental health in the psoriatic disease community is not appropriately addressed. The increased incidence of these mental health disorders in persons with psoriatic disease has been attributed to increased stressors of living with a chronic disease, social stigma associated with the disease, and evidence that inflammatory processes in psoriatic disease may also create neurological changes affecting mental health. Current research efforts include looking at ways that the treatment of anxiety and depression may help manage psoriatic disease and how biologic treatments for psoriatic disease impact depression.

The National Psoriasis Foundation (NPF) is seeking grant applications from researchers interested in conducting projects focused on mental health in psoriatic disease. The goal of this award is to support this area of unmet need in the psoriatic disease community by funding research focused on, but not limited to, investigation of psoriatic disease on mental health, as well as interventions for addressing this comorbidity, inflammatory processes, stigma, psychosocial impact of psoriasis, barriers to care, financial burden of chronic disease, or other related areas.

- I. Budget:** Applicants may request up to \$100,000 (**direct costs only**) per year.



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- II. Project period:** The project period for this Request for Applications is **one year**, from **August 1, 2021 – July 31, 2022**.
- III. Eligible Respondents and Program Requirements:** The applicant must hold a Ph.D., M.D., D.O., or equivalent degree and be personally and actively responsible for the conduct of the proposed research, and eligible to apply as principal investigator for research grants under the guidelines of the applicant's host institution. The applicant need not be a United States citizen and the research need not take place in the United States.
- IV. Important Dates:** Applications must be received by **WEDNESDAY, JAN. 13, 2021 at 5 P.M. PST**. Award notifications are anticipated by **JUNE 30, 2021**.
- V. Application Information:** More than Skin Deep: Mental Health Grant applications require a project proposal that includes specific aims, background and significance, preliminary data, and experimental design. The application along with all related forms can be found at <https://www.psoriasis.org/discovery-grants>.

Psoriatic disease doesn't discriminate. The NPF advocates for improved access to care and meaningful access to treatments. We support research and clinical trials focused on addressing health disparities and treating BIPOC. Applications should take into consideration representation of diverse population in all aspects of research, study team, and study participants/enrollees.

ⁱ Unpublished National Psoriasis Foundation 2019 Annual Survey Data.

ⁱⁱ Brandon E. Cohen, Kathryn J. Martires, Roger S. Ho. JAMA Dermatol. 2016;152(1):73-79. doi:10.1001/jamadermatol.2015.3605

ⁱⁱⁱ 2017 National Survey on Drug Use and Health.

^{iv} Wu JJ, Feldman SR, Koo J, Marangell LB. Epidemiology of mental health comorbidity in psoriasis. J Dermatol Treat. 2017; 10: 1-9

^v Wu JJ, Feldman SR, Koo J, Marangell LB. Epidemiology of mental health comorbidity in psoriasis. J Dermatol Treat. 2017; 10: 1-9

^{vi} Dowlathshahi EA, Wakkee M, Arends LR, Nijsten T. The prevalence and odds of depressive symptoms and clinical depression in psoriasis patients: a systematic review and meta-analysis. J Invest Dermatol. 2014; 134: 1542-1551.

^{vii} Singh S, Taylor C, Kornmehl H, Armstrong AW. Psoriasis and suicidality: A systematic review and meta-analysis. J Am Acad Dermatol. 2017; 77: 425-440.

^{viii} Singh S, Taylor C, Kornmehl H, Armstrong AW. Psoriasis and suicidality: A systematic review and meta-analysis. J Am Acad Dermatol. 2017; 77: 425-440.

^{ix} All Parliamentary Group on Skin. Mental Health and Skin Disease. 2020.