



Revolutionary skin cream offers new cure hope for recurrent melanoma

A groundbreaking study by Australian dermatologists has shown that a skin cream costing less than \$1 per week can stimulate an immune reaction that can be effective in clearing recurrent or secondary melanoma.

More than 400 Australian and international dermatologists attending the Australasian College of Dermatologists Annual Scientific Meeting in Darwin have heard that to date 66% of patients in the trial have shown complete tumour clearance, with most other patients in the trial showing slowing or partial clearance of their disease.

Compared with many other cancers, the study has shown that melanoma has the potential to be highly susceptible to immune attack.

Associate Professor Diona Damian, a Fellow of the Australasian College of Dermatologists, has been using the immune susceptibility of melanoma to treat patients on a trial basis with a cream containing diphencyprone (DPCP), which causes an immune reaction in treated areas of skin.

“This new hope comes within the context of Australia having the world’s highest incidence of skin cancer,” says A/Prof Damian.

“Each year, more than 8500 new cases of melanoma are diagnosed in Australia, and the lifetime risk of an Australian developing melanoma is one in 40 for women and one in 25 for men.

“Fortunately the majority of people who develop melanoma can be cured by early detection and surgery, however, some patients do develop recurrent disease, which may be in the local area of the original melanoma, or at distant sites around the body,” says A/Prof Damian.

Conventional treatments for melanoma recurrences in the skin include surgery, radiotherapy, and sometimes regional chemotherapy (where the treatment drugs are infused into the artery supplying an affected limb).

However, a number of patients are given such treatments without success, or find that they are unsuitable candidates for these conventional treatments.

“Of 18 patients who have completed the DPCP treatment so far, two thirds have completely cleared their skin tumours and most of the others have shown slowing or stabilising of their disease,” says A/Prof Damian.

“The success stories have included patients with melanoma covering large areas of their chest, arm, neck, and leg.

“In fact the first patient to receive treatment using DPCP has remained free of skin metastases (secondary melanomas) for five years.

“By harnessing the skin’s own immune responses to fight cancer, DPCP is a well-tolerated, inexpensive treatment option for patients with otherwise unmanageable tumours.”

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MEDIA ENQUIRIES

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