

In Search of a Cure

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Dermatologists are fortunate to have gained many new therapies for the treatment of psoriasis, including biologics, lasers, and topical agents. We have approached psoriasis as a chronic condition, often necessitating long-term treatment for patients. As physicians, we have used therapeutic interventions to achieve long-term control of the disease but nothing more definitive. Still, is a cure possible?

During Psoriasis Awareness Month in August 2007, the National Psoriasis Foundation (NPF) asked the public for help with a research program aimed at finding a cure for psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis.¹ Earlier this year, the NPF launched the National Psoriasis Victor Henschel BioBank, an initiative that will create the largest collection of psoriasis DNA samples gathered for psoriasis genetics research. This study was approved by the Genetic Alliance BioBank™ institutional review board on March 1, 2005.¹

The biobank currently is collecting DNA from blood samples and swabs of cheek cells from individuals with psoriasis and/or psoriatic arthritis (cases) as well as individuals without psoriasis (controls).¹ Samples will be processed and stored at a private laboratory, not at the NPF. The goal is to evaluate these samples in an effort to identify the genes that cause psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis. The biobank collection will be utilized to evaluate individuals' disease over time in a way that no other collection has done before.¹

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The NPF currently is seeking participants to help reach a goal of 2000 samples (1000 cases and 1000 controls) by the end of 2007. The biobank has 2 unique aspects: (1) the study has a software component that will collect data for the study of disease trends, such as age of onset, effectiveness of treatments, and health conditions associated with psoriasis; and (2) the biobank was created, funded, and is managed by the NPF, a nonprofit patient advocacy organization.²

Dermatologists have the opportunity to encourage patients to take part in this initiative. Participation in the biobank begins with online registration (www.psoriasis.org/research/biobank). A number of factors determine eligibility to participate. Qualified individuals will submit a blood sample and swab of cheek cells via a kit provided by the biobank, along with a completed medical history questionnaire.¹ The biobank will follow-up with patients yearly to update their medical histories. There is no cost to the participant and the privacy of each contributor is protected.¹

The ultimate goal for both patients and physicians is to discover a cure for psoriasis. At this point, we are quite far from meeting that objective. The biobank is a good step, and hopefully the dermatology community will fully support it.

REFERENCES

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