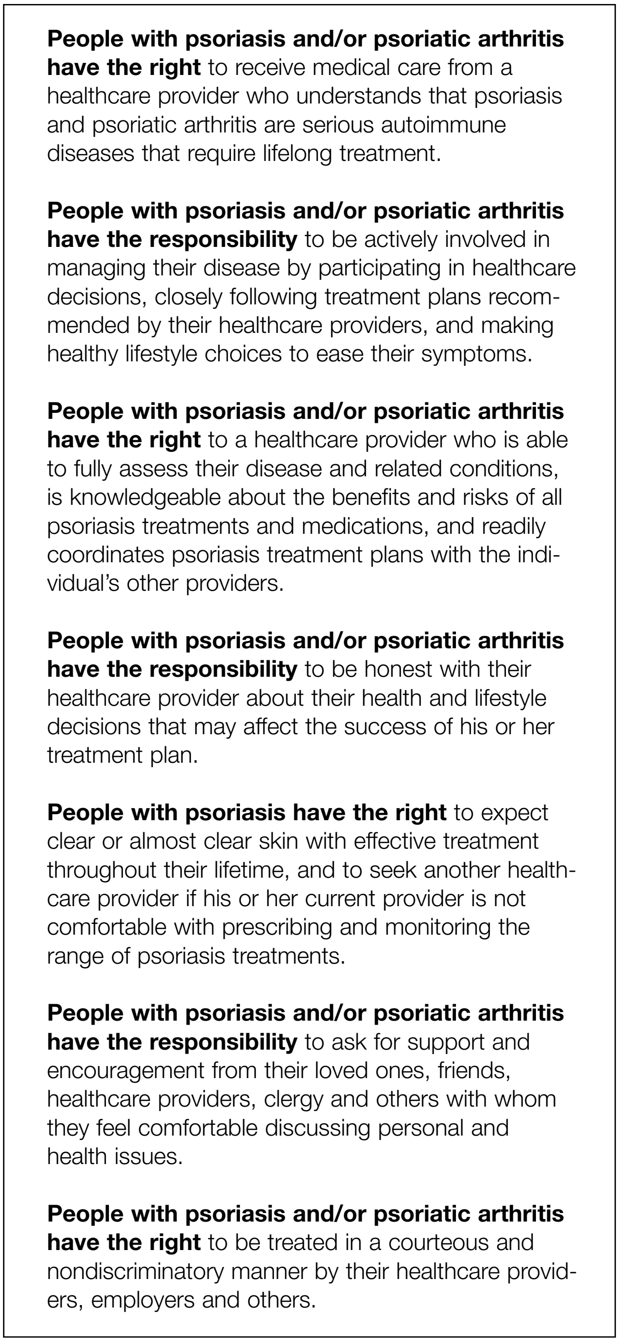
Rights and Wrongs

Jeffrey M. Weinberg, MD

The burden of psoriasis is well-known to all of us. Over the last few years, we have witnessed an increased understanding of the comorbidities and health sequelae of this disease. Therefore, this burden is even greater now than it was in the past. We also have an expanding array of new therapeutic options. Given this increasing complexity in the management of patients with psoriasis, it is understandable that these individuals are more distressed and in need of comprehensive care and counseling.

One of the major concerns I receive from my patients is that they were previously treated by one or more physicians who either did not have the knowledge or interest to treat psoriasis. Many patients feel that they were not provided all of their therapeutic options or were discouraged from pursuing certain treatments of interest. Some patients have been referred to dermatologists who have an increased focus on psoriasis. However, there are many individuals who report that during years of therapy, they were never informed that phototherapy or biologics even existed. Many patients have become increasingly aware that it is important to identify a healthcare provider with an interest in psoriasis, but many individuals are still unaware of the resources that are available.

The National Psoriasis Foundation recently created its Bill of Rights and Responsibilities for People with Psoriasis and Psoriatic Arthritis (Figure).[1] The goals of this document include the following: to ensure that patients living with psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis are fully and fairly treated, to help patients develop more effective relationships with medical providers, and to encourage doctors to take psoriatic disease more seriously and keep informed about treatment options.



People with psoriasis and/or psoriatic arthritis have the right to receive medical care from a healthcare provider who understands that psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis are serious autoimmune diseases that require lifelong treatment.

People with psoriasis and/or psoriatic arthritis have the responsibility to be actively involved in managing their disease by participating in healthcare decisions, closely following treatment plans recommended by their healthcare providers, and making healthy lifestyle choices to ease their symptoms.

People with psoriasis and/or psoriatic arthritis have the right to a healthcare provider who is able to fully assess their disease and related conditions, is knowledgeable about the benefits and risks of all psoriasis treatments and medications, and readily coordinates psoriasis treatment plans with the individual's other providers.

People with psoriasis and/or psoriatic arthritis have the responsibility to be honest with their healthcare provider about their health and lifestyle decisions that may affect the success of his or her treatment plan.

People with psoriasis have the right to expect clear or almost clear skin with effective treatment throughout their lifetime, and to seek another healthcare provider if his or her current provider is not comfortable with prescribing and monitoring the range of psoriasis treatments.

People with psoriasis and/or psoriatic arthritis have the responsibility to ask for support and encouragement from their loved ones, friends, healthcare providers, clergy and others with whom they feel comfortable discussing personal and health issues.

People with psoriasis and/or psoriatic arthritis have the right to be treated in a courteous and nondiscriminatory manner by their healthcare providers, employers and others.

The National Psoriasis Foundation's Bill of Rights and Responsibilities for People with Psoriasis and Psoriatic Arthritis. Reprinted with permission, ©2011, National Psoriasis Foundation.[1]

From the Department of Dermatology, St. Luke's-Roosevelt Hospital Center, New York, New York; Beth Israel Medical Center, New York; and Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons, New York.
Dr. Weinberg is on the president's council of the National Psoriasis Foundation.

The principles outlined in this Bill of Rights represent elements that are essential to the successful management of psoriasis. It is important for both the physician and patient to be educated; they should be able to communicate and form a partnership in determining the desired approach to the disease. The bill empowers patients to seek out an optimal environment for their treatment and to protect their rights in general society. It is a welcome addition to our fight against psoriasis and should be embraced by both clinicians and patients.

REFERENCE

1. Patient Bill of Rights: Bill of Rights and Responsibilities for People with Psoriasis and Psoriatic Arthritis. The National Psoriasis Foundation Web site. http://www.psoriasis.org/page.aspx?pid=1989. Accessed July 23, 2011.

QUICK POLL QUESTION

What percentage of your psoriatic patients is treated with topical therapy exclusively?

○ 10%
○ 25%
○ 50%
○ >50%

Go to **www.cutis.com** to answer our Quick Poll Question