

# AAD 2026 Annual Meeting Highlights

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The American Academy of Dermatology's 2026 Annual Meeting in Denver, Colorado, showcased advances in clinical practice and dermatology research. Selected key updates are summarized here for concise review of emerging dermatology data relevant to clinical practice.

## AI Holds Promise in Dermatology, Issues Remain to be Addressed

Artificial intelligence (AI) is rapidly advancing in dermatology, improving image analysis, clinical decision support, and workflow efficiency; however, concerns remain about ethical use, training gaps, and potential skill loss among clinicians. While AI may enhance productivity and care, experts emphasize the need for cautious implementation, education, and ongoing evaluation of real-world performance.

## Phase 2b Findings Support Novel Agent to Treat Alopecia Areata

A phase 2b trial of rezpegaldesleukin for severe alopecia areata showed considerably greater reductions in SALT scores vs placebo over 36 weeks, with higher response rates and no treatment plateau. The biologic, which enhances regulatory T-cell activity, demonstrated a favorable safety profile, with mainly mild injection-site reactions and no new safety signals.

## JAK Inhibitors: Identifying Ideal Candidates and Putting Real-World Risks in Context

Emerging evidence suggests Janus kinase (JAK) inhibitors are safer in dermatology than early rheumatoid arthritis data indicated. Risks for cardiovascular events, thrombosis, and malignancy appear low and largely driven by baseline patient factors. With appropriate screening and monitoring, these agents can be used safely in most patients with inflammatory skin diseases.

## Nemolizumab Phase 2 Findings Positive for Children 2-11 Years Old With Atopic Dermatitis

A phase 2 open-label study of nemolizumab in children aged 2 to 11 years with moderate to severe atopic dermatitis showed notable improvements in skin clearance, disease severity, and itch with weight-based dosing. Responses were rapid, durable through 52 weeks, and consistent

with prior data, with no new safety signals identified in this population.

## Melasma: A New Era of Topical Treatment Options Galore

Melasma treatment is rapidly expanding beyond traditional agents such as hydroquinone and triple combination therapy, with newer topicals including tranexamic acid, cysteamine, azelaic acid, thiamidol, and emerging compounds showing variable efficacy. While promising, evidence is still evolving, and combination regimens plus strict photoprotection remain the cornerstone of management.

## Weight-Loss Drug-Biologic Combination Boosts Relief in Psoriatic Arthritis

In a phase 3b trial, combining tirzepatide with ixekizumab significantly improved joint and skin outcomes in patients with psoriatic arthritis and overweight/obesity ( $P < .05$ ) compared with ixekizumab alone ( $P < .001$ ). The combination yielded higher American College of Rheumatology and Psoriasis Area and Severity Index response rates, early symptom improvement, and meaningful weight loss, with safety profiles consistent with known effects.

## Tips on Using Biologics for Psoriasis in Context of HIV

Evidence for biologic use in HIV-positive patients with moderate to severe psoriasis is limited, but available case reports suggest tumor necrosis factor inhibitors and newer IL-targeted biologics are generally effective without major impacts on viral load or CD4 counts. Experts recommend prioritizing nonimmunosuppressive options and coordinating care with HIV specialists due to potential infection risks.

## Upadacitinib Results in Significant Improvements in Nonsegmental Vitiligo in Phase 3 Studies

Two phase 3 trials showed that the Janus kinase 1 inhibitor upadacitinib significantly improved repigmentation outcomes in adolescents and adults with nonsegmental vitiligo vs placebo over 48 weeks ( $P < .0001$  for both), with a higher proportion achieving clinically meaningful reductions in Vitiligo Area and Severity Index scores. Benefits increased over time without plateau, and no new safety signals were identified.

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