

Atopic dermatitis



The articles in this issue of CME reflect the views of a number of individuals who developed the guideline for the management of atopic dermatitis (AD) to improve the outcome of its treatment in South Africa (SA). AD has a major impact on the quality of life

of sufferers and it is hoped that the articles and the guidelines they embody, if implemented, play a role in achieving these outcomes. Not only is AD the most common skin disease in children, but it causes tremendous morbidity. Engaging with many of these suffering children and their parents daily, is emotionally draining and energy sapping. No other skin condition places such demands on resources, time and the human spirit.

It is therefore essential that the management of AD should be optimal, with a thorough understanding of the pathogenesis, approaching it in a multi-professional manner. Understanding the disease will also contribute towards eliminating unnecessary investigations, unnecessary and inappropriate interventions and unsubstantiated treatment modalities. The simplistic way of approaching AD as 'an allergy' is long outdated, as the complexity of the condition becomes increasingly apparent with the publication of new information. All healthcare workers involved in the management of AD should take note of these guiding principles and try to implement them in clinical practice whenever possible.

The basis of each topic was developed through general consensus by a panel of four dermatologists and five paediatricians (including three allergists) from SA, based on evidence from an extensive literature review. Draft documents were made available for comment via the internet. All input, where appropriate, was then incorporated into the guideline.

This issue of CME consists of six full-length articles, covering the following topics: aetiopathogenesis,^[1] epidemiology,^[2] diagnosis,^[3] patient education and specialist referral,^[4] non-pharmacological treatment^[5] and pharmacological treatment.^[6] Summaries of the general approach to and guideline for the management of AD are also provided (available online only).^[7]

A disclaimer has to be added: these guidelines do not represent all possible methods of management applicable to all patients, do not exclude any other reasonable methods, and will not ensure successful treatment in every situation. The responsible physician should

take the unique circumstances of each patient into consideration regarding decisions about a specific therapy.

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We trust that all who read this issue will find it stimulating, informative and helpful in daily practice to improve the condition of these suffering children and adults.



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