

# Network News



*Happy New Year to you all*

This is the year that we will be calling on all network members to spring into action. Up until now, most of our work has been involved in getting our structure right and getting a democratic collaboration together. Now that we have some excellent ideas from you for a range of clinical trials to do, it is time to engage the network in conducting pilot studies to inform the external grant applications. With impending EU legislation, there is no such thing as a clinical trial on the cheap any more, and it is vital that we develop a professional set-up to tackle the urgent clinical dilemmas that face us in our everyday work. The network can only tackle these problems on a national basis if we all choose to contribute some time into the network. I realise that clinical demands are really tough, but I also believe that there is a genuine desire amongst members to do something important for the greater good of people with skin problems. Although there are relatively few dermatologists in the UK, our productivity for clinical research is very high. Let us build on this excellent tradition and start delivering together in 2004.

**Hywel Williams, Chairman**

## Who we are






The network is composed of individual members, regional co-ordinators, a large steering committee with wide representation, and a smaller executive for decision-making. The group was accepted as an affiliate member of the British Association of Dermatologists (BAD) in July 2003.

We are grateful to the continuing support of NHS National Co-ordinating Centre for Research Capacity Development for providing infrastructure support to enable us to support Dr Kim Thomas as co-ordinator, and for additional administrative support in the form of Mrs Phillippa Scott.

## Progress of trials


We have now received over 50 suggestions for possible trials for consideration by the Network. Following a postal vote of the

membership in 2002, this list has been refined to five priority topic areas:

-  **Secondary prevention for cellulitis of the lower leg – does medium-term antibiotic therapy prevent recurrences or other morbidity?** *Lead: Neil Cox, Carlisle*
-  **Which treatment is better for pyoderma gangrenosum: topical tacrolimus, topical steroid, systemic cyclosporine or systemic steroids?** *Lead: Tony Ormerod, Aberdeen*
-  **Comparison of retinoids, PUVA and rPUVA in the treatment of Palmo-plantar pustulosis (PPP).** *Lead: Johnny Bourke, Cork*
-  **Compare the efficacy and safety of treatment with high-dose Intravenous Immuno-globulins (IVIG) and pulsed high-dose methylprednisolone in patients with Toxic Epidermal Necrolysis (TEN) and Stevens-Johnson syndrome (SJS).** *Lead: Nick Craven, Burnley*
-  **A randomised trial of surgery vs radiotherapy vs Imiquimod in the treatment of Lentigo Maligna.** *Lead: Robert Russell-Jones, London*

The trials are in varying stages of development; some are mere titles on the page, whilst others have outline proposals in progress. However, the trial most likely to become the inaugural UK DCTN trial is Neil Cox's excellent suggestion for the prophylactic treatment of cellulitis. A crucial pilot study for this trial will be conducted during the early part of 2004, with view to a submission to the British Skin Foundation for funding of a full-scale study later in the year.

## HTA Affiliate Scheme

 During 2002, the National Co-ordinating Centre for Health Technology Assessment (NCCHTA) put out a call for expressions of interest from affiliate organisations. These organisations undertook to work with the NCC HTA in identifying research gaps and submitting topics for inclusion in the research programme co-ordinated by the NCC HTA.

The UK DCTN has been recognised as an affiliate member of the NCC HTA and we now represent the membership of the British Association of Dermatologists (BAD) in submitting trial suggestions.

We shall be submitting vignettes for all of the priority topic areas identified through the postal vote. We will await to see if any are prioritised by the NCC HTA.

### Survey

Thanks to all members who completed and returned the Proposed Trials questionnaire. We will use these results to inform the design of our pilot studies and future grant applications.

### Funding update

As with any endeavour of this scale, infrastructure support is crucial to its continued success. We are extremely grateful that our core NHS funding has recently been extended until April 2005. In the meantime, an external review is scheduled for April 2004, when we will have the opportunity to bid for further long-term funding.

In addition to this core support, we have received donations of £5,000 each from Roche Products Ltd, Leo Pharmaceuticals, GlaxoSmithKline and Galderma and £2500 from 3M. We would like to take this opportunity to thank these companies for their generous support in helping our network to get started. It is intended that these donations will fund some crucial pilot studies to be conducted in 2004.

Proceeds from the 2003 Evidence-Based Update meeting on acne were also donated to the network by the Centre of Evidence Based Dermatology. This year's evidence-based update will be on the topic of psoriasis treatments and will include talks on the new biological response modifiers (*see box*).

### How can you get more involved?

Membership of the network is open to anyone with an interest in skin disease and research. If you would like to learn more about our activities or to become involved in being a collaborator, then please do contact the co-ordinating team. (*See contact details at end*)

#### You can help by:

- Submitting trial ideas
- Commenting on proposals
- Becoming a regional co-ordinator
- Identifying consumers who would be keen to join the network
- Helping with the recruitment and assessment of patients

## Dates for your diary

### Network Meetings:

- **Tuesday 16 March 2004**  
BAD House, London  
(1-2pm Executive Group only)  
2-5pm Steering Group
- **Tuesday 6 July 2004**  
BAD Annual Meeting, Belfast  
(8-9am Executive Group only)  
5-6pm Annual General Meeting
- **Friday 22 October 2004**  
BAD House, London  
1-3pm Steering Group  
(3-4pm Executive Group only)

### Other Meetings:

#### Psoriasis An Evidence Based Update

**Thursday 22 April 2004**  
**Novotel, Nottingham**  
(see attached programme)

### Web site developments

The network has a small, developing web presence on the University of Nottingham's web site:

[www.nottingham.ac.uk/dermatology](http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/dermatology) and is listed as an affiliate group on the BAD web site: [www.bad.org.uk](http://www.bad.org.uk)

We intend to further develop these sites in 2004 in order to make them more interactive and useful to the membership.

### Contact details

For further information on the network; suggestions or comments relating to the web site, or if you would like further information on the Psoriasis Update meeting please contact Phillippa Scott....

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