



UK DERMATOLOGY CLINICAL TRIALS NETWORK

ANNUAL REPORT 2024

Highlights:

- New funding for skin cancer trials
- Studies on acne, skin cancer surgery and lichen sclerosis open to recruitment
- 2024 UK DCTN Trainee Groups
- Working with the NIHR HTA to prioritise Commissioned Research Calls in dermatology



LETTER FROM THE CHAIR



So, my first full year as UK DCTN Chair has come to an end and it has been quite the whirlwind of activity! Thank you to everyone who has supported me in finding my feet in this new role. It has been lovely meeting so many of you. These introductions are almost always accompanied by personal reflections on how much you have valued the UK DCTN activities and how lucky dermatology as a discipline is to have such an organisation. I couldn't agree more, and this annual report really drives home how much fantastic work is going on in the dermatology community, with UK DCTN support, to design, deliver and disseminate clinical research.

A real highlight for me this year was joining the presentations by our UK DCTN Trainee groups for 2024. You can read more about these in the report but with the fantastic ideas presented, I can assure you that the future of dermatology research is in good hands! A huge thank you to our mentors and experts who support these groups and allow us to deliver the programme.

The Spotlight section of this year's report highlights some of the progress that has been made in skin surgery research and you can read about some of the feasibility studies and clinical trials that the UK DCTN has helped to support in this area. Many of these have been led by former UK DCTN fellows and trainees so hopefully that will inspire some of this year's participants!

The UK DCTN portfolio continues to grow, now taking up a full four pages of this report, which is brilliant. It is wonderful to see the breadth of conditions, recruiting contexts and designs. It really highlights that there is no such thing as a "typical" UK DCTN study. If you think you might have a question that can benefit dermatology patients and address clinical uncertainties, then we are here to support you. To that end, from February 2025, we will be offering research clinics to anyone who has an initial idea and wants to have an informal chat with our team. So please do sign up or share the details with colleagues that you think might be interested.

Thank you to everyone who helps to support the valuable work of the UK DCTN whether it is by sitting on one of our committees, contributing your ideas for us to support, or sharing our details with your colleagues. The network's success is enabled by its engaged and diverse membership. Thank you as well to the British Association of Dermatologists for their ongoing and enthusiastic support of the Network.

With best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Beth Stuart', written over a light grey horizontal line.

Prof Beth Stuart, UK DCTN Steering Committee Chair

Professor of Statistics and Clinical Trials Director of the Pragmatic Trials Unit, Queen Mary University London

ABOUT THE UK DCTN

The UK Dermatology Clinical Trials Network (UK DCTN) was established in 2002 by Professor Hywel Williams and a group of dermatologists and patient representatives with the aim of providing better evidence for the treatment and prevention of skin disease. Our focus is to support the development of independent dermatology clinical trials and build research capacity across the dermatology community and we are open to research suggestions on any skin condition.

Now chaired by Prof Beth Stuart, the UK DCTN has grown to over 1,200 members across the UK. This includes dermatology consultants and trainees, patients and carers, dermatology nurses, general practitioners, academic researchers and support staff all working together collaboratively to meet the aims of the Network. Information about our committees and governance structures can be found on page 17 of this report.

Our team

We are a small team based at the UK DCTN Co-ordinating Centre, Centre of Evidence Based Dermatology, University of Nottingham. Funding for our Trial Development and Network Managers is kindly provided by the British Association of Dermatologists (BAD) with additional infrastructure support provided by the University of Nottingham. With support from the wider UK DCTN membership and our committees, we:

- work with a wide range of investigators across the country to support the development of research ideas into fundable research proposals
- support training and capacity building in applied dermatology research
- offer small funding grants to help pump-prime dermatology research in the UK



Laura Howells
Trial Development
Manager



Carron Layfield
Network
Manager



Maggie Mcphee
Research
Co-ordinator

Remember, it's **FREE to join** the Network and anyone with an interest in applied dermatology research is welcome to join.

New for 2025 – UK DCTN Research Clinics

We'll be hosting UK DCTN research clinics from Feb 2025. If you have an idea for a study but aren't sure what to do why not come along and get some advice in a friendly and informal environment? Please see <https://www.ukdctn.org/idea-for-a-trial/index.aspx> for more information and how to book.

2024 HIGHLIGHTS

In addition to personal successes to celebrate, there have been some real achievements across the wide and varied UK DCTN study portfolio over the past year including new studies funded, studies opening to recruitment and plenty of research capacity development activities too.

MBE for Prof Nick Levell

Honours Recognition for UK DCTN Committee member

We were delighted to see UK DCTN Executive Committee member Prof Nick Levell awarded an MBE in the King's 2024 New Years Honours list. This well-deserved award was made for his commitment to the field of dermatology as well as furthering charitable and research causes.

Newly funded research

Funding confirmed for new studies in skin cancer

The SPOT-IT trial has been funded by CRUK (Prevention and Population Research Theme). Led by Prof Catherine Harwood and Dr Rubeta Matin, it will investigate prevention of SCC by targeting actinic keratinocytes. The EXCISE study (led by Dr Rachel Abbot and funded by the NIHR) will look at the role of antibiotics following surgical removal of ulcerated skin cancers. Please see page 10 for further details.

New studies meet internal pilot targets

Recruitment going well for new studies

The PEARLS study, HEALS study and the RCT associated with Acne Care Online (ACO) all recruited their first patients this year and have gone on to meet their internal pilot recruitment targets. This is due to the hard efforts of study teams and local recruiting centres up and down the country. Well done to everyone involved. You can find out more about all studies developed with UK DCTN support on pages 7-10 of this report.

Acne study opens to recruitment

ACNE ID recruits first patients

ACNE-ID opened to recruitment at the end of November and recruited its first participant just a few days later. Please see page 9 for further details of this study which is investigating different dosing strategies for isotretinoin for the treatment of severe acne in younger people.

NIHR eczema evidence update

Eczema studies highlighted in NIHR evidence collection

It was great to see a number of studies developed with UK DCTN support featured in the [NIHR evidence collection on childhood eczema](#). Published in March 2024, this summary brought results from a number of studies together including CLOTHES, BEE, BEEP and TREAT to highlight the new evidence generated for treating paediatric eczema patients.

Research Capacity Building

2024 UK DCTN Fellows and Trainee Groups

Our fifth cohort of UK DCTN Trainee Groups took place this year, with 24 dermatology trainees working together across four groups. In addition, six UK DCTN Fellowships were awarded in 2024, including two GP Awards and a Portfolio Pathway Fellowship. Please see pages 15-16 for more information.

Honorary Lifetime Membership Awards

Celebrating significant contribution to the UK DCTN

We instigated our Honorary Lifetime Membership Awards as part of our 20th birthday celebrations in 2022 to help recognise sustained and significant contributions to the UK DCTN. Congratulations to Dr Debbie Shipley and Mrs Amanda Roberts who received this year's awards at our 2024 AGM.

Online eczema bathing trial recruits 400+ patients

First Rapid Eczema Trials study recruits to target

The Eczema Bathing Study, which aimed to show if it's better for those affected by eczema to have a bath/shower once a day or once a week, recruited to target in just under 5 months. This was a fantastic achievement for the first study to emerge from this research programme, with 438 participants taking part in this online trial (330 adults and 108 children). Find out more on the study website

<https://rapideczematrials.org/eczema-bathing-study/>.

SPOTLIGHT ON DERMATOLOGICAL SURGERY RESEARCH

We wanted to take this opportunity to highlight the advances made in applied skin surgery research over the past decade and the contribution the UK DCTN has made to the field.

We are particularly proud of the role the UK DCTN has played in supporting the development of future Chief Investigators and helping others develop their research skills. All five cohorts of our UK DCTN Trainee Groups have included skin cancer surgery projects, with the 2018 programme solely focusing on skin surgery. Former UK DCTN Fellows Dr Rachel Abbott, Dr Aaron Wernham and Dr David Veitch are all now Chief Investigators of skin surgery clinical trials. They comment below on their experience of working with the network.

From UK DCTN SpR Fellow to TGPP Chair and CI for the EXCISE study

After transferring my training from London to Wales (and returning from maternity leave) I was awarded the 2011 UK DCTN SpR Fellowship Award. This opened up several opportunities as a co-author for systematic reviews with the Cochrane Skin Group, as well as involvement in Priority Setting Partnerships.



In 2016, I was asked to supervise a UK DCTN trainee group who chose to investigate the use of antibiotics in skin surgery. The trainees conducted feasibility work including an observational multi-centre study (OASIS which was funded by a UK DCTN pump-priming award). Subsequently, I led the development of the EXCISE trial, with support from the UK DCTN and the Centre for Trials Research at Cardiff University. This was funded by the National Institute for Health and Care Research Health Technology Assessment funding programme (NIHR HTA) in 2024 and is now in set-up phase (please see page 10 for details).

In 2022, I was invited to be Chair of UK DCTN Trial Generation Prioritisation Panel which involves reviewing full vignette applications to the UK DCTN before they are presented to the Steering Committee as well as overseeing cohorts of UK DCTN Trainee Groups to inspire the next generation of researchers.

Dr Rachel Abbott, Consultant Dermatologist, Cardiff and Vale University Health Board

Research Prioritisation

The priority setting partnership (PSP) for skin cancer surgery was supported by the UK DCTN and has helped to inform priorities for future research in this field. This work was co-led by David Veitch and I after completing UK DCTN Trainee Fellowships, where we had learned the importance of priority setting in other UK DCTN supported PSP projects.

We secured a joint funding grant from the UK DCTN and BSIDS from the UK DCTN themed call for dermatologic surgery in 2019 and proceeded to build a collaborative team from across all skin cancer



specialities alongside a passionate group of patients and carers to form a steering committee. Despite the setback of the Covid pandemic in 2020, we pushed forward using virtual meetings to complete the final face-to-face workshop in May 2022 to decide the Top 10 priorities (see <https://www.jla.nihr.ac.uk/priority-setting-partnerships/skin-cancer-surgery#tab-28471>). Since then, we have promoted this work, publishing the outcomes in the BJD and presenting to skin cancer specialists at national meetings.

We would like to thank everyone who contributed to the PSP Steering Committee and final workshops, as well as all the charities and support groups who assisted us in making this work a success. In particular, we would like to thank the UK DCTN for its support and expertise in project management, guiding us from start to finish. We hope this work will inspire further high-quality research studies in skin cancer surgery over the coming years in addition to the UK DCTN supported HEALS2 and EXCISE trials which are leading the way in skin cancer surgery research and helping develop a network of research collaborators across the UK.

Dr Aaron Wernham, Consultant Dermatologist, Walsall and Wolverhampton NHS Trusts

Funded Studies

HEALS2 is a clinical trial which aims to understand whether the use of compression bandaging or hosiery reduces the time it takes for wounds to heal by secondary intention after surgical removal of a suspected keratinocyte skin cancer on the lower leg. Patients undergoing excisional biopsy are randomised 1:1 to secondary intention healing + compression or secondary intention + no compression. Healing is assessed by blinded assessors and the study is managed from the



HEALS2 has successfully met the green criteria after the pilot phase of the study. Our target recruitment is 396 by the end of the trial. The UK DCTN have been integral to the inception, feasibility work and delivery of the full study.

The original idea spawned from the UK DCTN trainee group meeting in 2013 with the feasibility work funding coming from a subsequent successful application to the UK DCTN Themed Call research award scheme. Their support throughout helped maintain momentum and they were uniquely placed to advise on the application process for funding through the NIHR. Collaborating with the UK DCTN no doubt helped achieve funding for this study and their ongoing support is helping to drive the delivery of this important trial.

Dr David Veitch, Consultant Dermatologist, Shropshire and Wolverhampton NHS Trust

ONGOING STUDIES

These studies are funded via a range of National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) funding streams and managed with support from various Clinical Trials Units across the UK.

COAT - Cellulitis Optimal Antibiotic Treatment

Is a shorter course of oral flucloxacillin as effective as a longer course in initial treatment of lower limb cellulitis in primary care?

This is a blinded, non-inferiority trial comparing 5 days vs 7 days of flucloxacillin for the treatment of cellulitis. It is recruiting 356 participants from primary care sites across the UK.

Chief Investigator: Prof. Nick Francis, Southampton

Website: <https://www.southampton.ac.uk/ctu/coat-study.page>

Email: coat@soton.ac.uk



TIGER - Trial of food allergy tests (IgE) for eczema relief

Does food allergy testing improve eczema control?

This study is recruiting 493 children with moderate to severe eczema aged between 3 months and 2 years via GP surgeries. Children will be randomised to "usual care" or "test guided dietary advice" based on the results of food allergy tests.

Chief investigator: Prof. Matthew Ridd, Bristol

Website: <https://tiger.blogs.bristol.ac.uk/>

Email: tiger-study@bristol.ac.uk



Acne Care Online

Developing and testing an online intervention to support self-management, improve outcomes and reduce antibiotic use in acne

This five-year research programme aims to improve outcomes for mild/moderate acne by promoting use of effective treatments and reducing overuse of long-term oral antibiotics. This includes the development of an online intervention for self-management of acne.

Chief Investigators: Dr Ingrid Muller and Prof. Miriam Santer, Southampton

Website: <https://www.southampton.ac.uk/primarycare/acnecareonline.page>

Email: acnecare@soton.ac.uk



Rapid Eczema Trials

Taking a 'citizen science' approach to eczema research

This five-year programme is investigating new approaches to undertaking studies in mild to moderate eczema. Co-production with patients is key throughout and workstreams include efficient online trials in the NHS, an online platform to allow patient led trials and implementation and process evaluation including work with seldom heard groups.

Chief Investigators: Amanda Roberts and Prof. Kim Thomas, Nottingham

Website: rapideczematrials.org

Email: eczema@nottingham.ac.uk



BEACON

Best systemic treatments for adults with atopic eczema over the long term

This study will compare ciclosporin, methotrexate and dupilumab in adults with moderate to severe eczema. It will measure the effectiveness, tolerability, and cost-effectiveness of these three key systemic treatments.

BEACON will be set up as a multi-arm, multi-stage platform trial capable of adding new arms as novel therapies emerge and will be, to our knowledge, the first of its kind globally in dermatology.

Chief Investigators: Prof. Catherine Smith and Dr Andrew Pink, London

Website: <https://www.beacontrial.org/>

Email: BEACON@kcl.ac.uk



PEARLS

Proactive vs reactive therapy for the prevention of lichen sclerosis (LS) exacerbation and progression of disease.

This is a 2-arm, parallel-group, randomised, unblinded, multi-centre, superiority trial and aims to recruit 400 females over the age of 5 years affected by LS from secondary care sites across the UK. It also includes an embedded health economic and process evaluation.

Chief Investigators: Dr Rosalind Simpson & Prof. Kim Thomas, Nottingham

Website: <https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/pearls/>

Email: PEARLS@nottingham.ac.uk



HEALS2

Compression therapy for wound healing

This study will compare compression therapy to standard care for the healing of excisional wounds on the lower leg by secondary intention following removal of a keratinocyte skin cancer. The primary objective is to compare the time it takes for the surgical wound to fully heal and the study aims to recruit 396 participants from secondary care skin cancer surgical centres across the UK



Chief investigators: Dr David Veitch, Oxford and Dr Aaron Wernham, West Mids

Website: <https://ctr.u.leeds.ac.uk/heals2/>

Email: heals2@leeds.ac.uk

SCC-AFTER

Adjuvant radiotherapy for high-risk squamous cell carcinoma

This study will look at whether adding a course of radiotherapy following surgery in 'high-risk' patients will help reduce recurrence of squamous cell carcinoma. The study aims to recruit 840 participants who will be randomly allocated to either a course of radiotherapy and active monitoring or active monitoring alone.



Chief investigators: Prof. Catherine Harwood, London and Dr Agata Rembielak, Manchester

Website: <https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/centre-for-trials-research/research/studies-and-trials/view/scc-after>

Email: SCCAFTER@cardiff.ac.uk

ACNE-ID

Lower dose isotretinoin for severe acne

This study will be investigating the benefits and harms of a reduced daily dose of oral isotretinoin in the treatment of young people aged 12-24 years with severe acne and will involve the recruitment of 800 participants from 20 sites.



Chief Investigators are Dr Esther Burden-Teh and Prof. Kim Thomas, Nottingham

Website: <https://www.nctu.ac.uk/our-research/randomised-trials/current-studies/acne-id.aspx>

Email: acne-id@nottingham.ac.uk

NEWLY FUNDED and STUDIES IN SET UP

The following clinical trials are at various stages of study set-up.

DEXACELL

Dexamethasone for cellulitis

Funded by the NIHR Health Technology Assessment Programme, this trial will investigate whether prescribing dexamethasone alongside antibiotics improves symptoms and reduces the need for further antibiotics and healthcare visits among patients with cellulitis who attend A&E or similar NHS urgent care settings. The study aims to recruit 450 patients.



Chief Investigators: Prof. Ed Carlton and Dr Fergus Hamilton, Bristol

Website: <https://sites.exeter.ac.uk/dexacell/home/>

Email: DEXACELL@exeter.ac.uk

EXCISE

Role of antibiotics post skin cancer surgery

Funded by the NIHR Health Technology Assessment Programme, the EXCISE study will compare the clinical and cost effectiveness of oral flucloxacillin versus no antibiotic (placebo) in adults undergoing ulcerated skin cancer excision under local anaesthetic with planned wound closure. This randomised double-blind trial aims to recruit 380 adult patients undergoing surgical excision of ulcerated skin cancer from 8-10 hospital sites across the UK.

Chief investigator: Dr Rachel Abbott, Cardiff

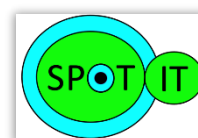
Website (funder): <https://www.fundingawards.nihr.ac.uk/award/NIHR160872>

Email: UKDCTN@nottingham.ac.uk

SPOT IT

SCC prevention study

Funded by Cancer Research UK (CRUK, Prevention and Population Theme) this study is investigating several research questions. A phase III trial will aim to establish if topical chemotherapy with 5% 5-fluorouracil (5FU, Efudix cream®) monotherapy is superior to standard-of-care (sunscreen + surveillance) in chemoprevention of cutaneous squamous cell carcinoma (cSCC) in immunosuppressed people? Dependent on the outcome of this study, exploratory studies will then be undertaken comparing combination therapies for chemoprevention of SCC.



Chief investigators: Prof Catherine Harwood, London and Dr Rubeta Matin, Oxford

Website: <https://www.bssci.org.uk/spot-it-cutaneous-scc-prevention-using-topical-therapy-in-immunosuppressed-patients/>

Email: SPOT-IT@cardiff.ac.uk

NEW RESEARCH PROPOSALS CONSIDERED DURING 2024

The TGPP review each research proposal for its suitability and readiness to go to the Steering Committee.

Panel Members

Rachel Abbott
(Chair)
Alison Layton
Alia Ahmed
Antonia Lloyd-Lavery
Anna Lalonde
Nadine Marrouche
Alison Sears
Lucy Bradshaw
Esther Burden-Teh
Paul Leighton
Shernaz Walton
Andrew Hodder
Eleanor Earp
Alison Lowe
Simi Sudhakaran
Andrew Pink
Jaskiran Azad

There are three pathways to submit a research idea for UK DCTN support:

1. Early outline – an idea to 'sound out' with our Steering Committee
2. Full vignette – a firm study proposal for reviewing
3. Fast-track – a study with a funder deadline

The following ideas were considered by the Trial Generation and Prioritisation Panel (TGPP) and/or Steering Committee during 2024:

Studies submitted as full vignette

THESEUS II

Is laser hair treatment safe and efficacious for moderate to severe hidradenitis suppurativa (HS) when added to adalimumab biosimilar therapy?

Dr John Ingram, Cardiff

Studies submitted on fast-track route

Management of Chronic Plaque Psoriasis

A randomised observer blind trial comparing methotrexate subcutaneous injection with adalimumab in patients with moderate psoriasis with PASI scores ≥ 5 and < 10 .

Dr Philip Hampton, Newcastle

NIHR HTA commissioned research calls in dermatology

In addition to researcher led studies, the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) Health Technology Assessment funding stream also commission specific research to be undertaken. Several studies in the UK DCTN portfolio have been funded via this route including ACNE-ID and PEARLS.

We are actively working with the NIHR HTA team to encourage more suggestions for consideration as commissioned calls for dermatology trials. Over the past year we have submitted fifteen research ideas from UK DCTN members via this route. We look forward to seeing which of these are prioritised and progressed by the NIHR HTA and supporting study teams in developing proposals for such commissioned briefs.

STUDY DEVELOPMENT PIPELINE

We have been busy working with trial development teams and individuals across the UK to create high quality, fundable trial proposals.

Study	Progress
MOVE SMART Does a 'sedentary interruption' intervention have clinical utility in the management of psoriasis? Dr Helen Young, Manchester	Submitted for funding (full stage, intervention development)
THESEUS II Is laser hair treatment safe and efficacious for moderate to severe hidradenitis suppurativa (HS) when added to adalimumab biosimilar therapy? Dr John Ingram, Cardiff	Submitted for funding (full stage, RCT)
Management of Chronic Plaque Psoriasis A randomised observer blind trial comparing methotrexate sc injection with adalimumab in patients with moderate psoriasis with PASI scores ≥ 5 and < 10 . Dr Philip Hampton, Newcastle	Submitted for funding (Commissioned Call, outline stage, RCT)
OPINION Online psychological intervention (compassion focused therapy) for people with vitiligo Dr Viktoria Eleftheriadou, Birmingham	In development
POWER Utility of topical Oestrogen in the treatment of lichen sclerosus in adult women Dr Jaskiran Azad, Middlesbrough	In development
CANVAS Are superficial absorbable sutures non-inferior to superficial non-absorbable sutures? Aaron Wernham West Mids & David Veitch, Leicester	Feasibility work complete (development of main study on hold)

The UK DCTN is open to trial suggestions from all our members. Please get in touch at ukdctn@nottingham.ac.uk to see how we can help support you to develop your idea.

UK DCTN THEMED RESEARCH CALL AWARDS

Our annual themed call awards provide up to £10,000 to research teams undertaking pilot or feasibility work which will help inform the topic or design of a future clinical trial. The theme of the award changes each year in response to the needs of the dermatology community. Details of all previous awards can be found on the UK DCTN website <https://www.ukdctn.org/funding-awards/ukdctn-funding-awards.aspx>.

2024 Themed Call

The topic for our 2024 Themed Call was 'Supporting Dermatology Research Priorities Identified by Priority Setting Partnerships (PSPs)'. Up to three awards of £10,000 each were available due to generous co-funding from the British Society for Dermatological Surgery (BSDS) and British Society for Paediatric and Adolescent Dermatology (BSPAD). A total of nine applications were received and after short-listing and presentation to the UK DCTN Steering Committee, two funding awards were made (as neither involved surgery, funding from the BSDS was not taken forward).



Funded projects:

Management of Pain in Hidradenitis Suppurativa (HS)

A mixed-methods study to improve the understanding of the experience of pain by HS patients and the management of pain by health professionals. The findings will inform guidelines for healthcare professionals managing pain in HS and support the development of a clinical trial for pain treatments in HS.

Study team: Dr Hannah Wainman, Dr John Ingram, Prof Anthony Bewley, Dr Graham Dunthorne, Dr Roger Knaggs, Dr Barry McGrath, Dr Angelika Razzaque, Dr Roxanne Parslow, Dr Kave Shams, Dr Lauren Orenstein

Feasibility work to support a Randomised Controlled Trial (RCT) on spironolactone use in acne for adolescent females

A mixed-methods study to inform the feasibility of a RCT investigating the effectiveness and safety of oral spironolactone for treatment of acne in female adolescent patients (12-17-years old).

Study team: Dr Fiona Sexton, Dr Zahra Moledina, Dr Lisa O'Higgins, Dr Julia Fordham, Dr Myranda Attard, Dr Grishma Ramesh, Dr Susannah George, Dr Esther Burden-Teh (2024 UK DCTN Trainee Group, pictured right)



Ongoing Themed Call Funded Studies

2022 Genital Dermatoses

PsOAR – psoriasis in the anogenital region. A series of online focus groups with people who have a diagnosis of anogenital psoriasis to discuss their experiences and views on treatment options.

Study team: Dr Priya Patel, Dr Christiana Stavrou, Dr Dijon Milette, Dr Aarthu Uthayakumar (2021 UK DCTN Trainee Group with mentors Dr Rosalind Simpson, Dr Alia Ahmed, Dr Alison Sears)

2021 Paediatric Dermatology (co-funded with National Eczema Society and British Association of Paediatric Dermatology)

TECH Study - teleconsultations in paediatric eczema. Feasibility work including patient and clinician surveys and focus groups with parents/carers of young children with eczema.



Study team: Dr Natalie King-Stokes, Dr Aoife Daly, Dr Sarah McCusker, Dr Manrup Hunjan (2021 UK DCTN Trainee Group with mentors Dr Esther Burden-Teh, Dr Susannah George, Dr Lea Solman)

SLEEP Study - supporting children and young people's sleep in those with eczema. A mixed-methods study exploring children's, young people's, parents' and healthcare professionals' experiences and management of sleep disturbance related to eczema.



Study team: Prof. Carsten Flohr, Dr Ingrid Muller, Dr Conor Broderick, Dr Shona Cameron

2020 Psychological Interventions for Skin Disease

Kids in Control - breaking the itch-scratch cycle. Development of a virtual habit reversal intervention material for children with atopic eczema.

Study team: Prof. Carsten Flohr, Dr Susannah Baron, Dr Ingrid Muller, Dr Alpa Kanji

2025 Themed Call Funding Opportunity - Skin of Colour

Our theme for next year is 'Skin of Colour'. If you are thinking of doing a clinical trial in this area and need to do some initial feasibility work or are interested in undertaking other development work that will go on to inform a trial in this area please get in touch at ukdctn@nottingham.ac.uk . Up to £10,000 is available and full details are on the UK DCTN website <https://www.ukdctn.org/funding-awards/ukdctn-funding-awards.aspx>.

RESEARCH CAPACITY BUILDING AND TRAINING

The UK DCTN continues to support and develop dermatology research leaders of the future via innovative schemes including our annual Fellowship awards, research Trainee Groups and a virtual journal club for dermatology trainees.

UK DCTN Fellowships

A range of UK DCTN Fellowships are open to applications from Dermatology Specialist Registrars (SpRs), clinicians pursuing the Portfolio Pathway for specialist registration, GPs, nurses and pharmacists. These educational awards are made on an annual basis and UK DCTN Fellows obtain training and experience in trial development and critical appraisal over a two-year period. To date, over 70 research Fellowships have been awarded and many alumni have since assumed leadership roles in Network activities, gone on to be study chief investigators and supported other studies by becoming principal investigators at recruiting sites.

Thank you so much for the opportunity to take part in the Fellowship. I've really enjoyed the projects I've been able to take part in so far and am keen to keep learning more. It has very much changed my perspective on research. Very grateful to all of the team at the network for all of the educational experiences and support in making contact with others in the world of research!

William Price, UK DCTN Pharmacist Fellow 22-24

UK DCTN Fellowship awards 2024

GP Fellowships	Phillipa Bowes (Isle of Wight) Ramyya Savinathan (London)
Portfolio Pathway Fellowship	Rajeskar Senniapan (Dumfores and Galloway)
Nurse/Pharmacist Fellowship	Lucy Moorhead (London)
SpR Fellowships	Gavin Fong* (Nottingham) Rebecca Lapsley (Middlesborough)

*Neil Cox Award for highest overall scoring applicant

Virtual Journal Club for Dermatology Trainees

UK DCTN SpR Fellows have continued to organise and deliver a programme of online journal club sessions primarily aimed at dermatology trainees. The 2024 sessions focused on different types of research. Two guest speakers presented as follows with the other sessions delivered by the UK DCTN SpR Fellows themselves:

- Epidemiological studies - Dr Zoe Venables
- Retrospective cohort studies
- Big Data
- The BEE eczema RCT – Prof Matt Ridd

Useful resources including videos and papers presented are available on the journal club web page <http://www.ukdctn.org/journal-club/index.aspx> and further sessions will continue in 2025.

2024 Trainee Groups

The UK DCTN Trainee Groups programme is held every two to three years, with over 100 trainees involved across five cohorts since 2013. The scheme aims to help Dermatology Trainees achieve required research competencies and develop skills in clinical research methodology.

Participants work in small groups under the guidance of experienced mentors over a period of six months to develop clinical research ideas, including undertaking two training days on clinical research skills. The groups are encouraged to publish their work and move their ideas forward into the UK DCTN trial development pipeline if feasible. The EXCISE and HEALS2 studies both originated from UK DCTN Trainee Group activities.

Twenty-four dermatology trainees took part in the 2024 UK DCTN Trainee Groups programme developing projects across themes of medical dermatology, paediatric dermatology and skin surgery as outlined below. All teams are continuing to develop their ideas.



Feasibility study for spironolactone for the treatment of HS in adult females

Mentors: Dr Alia Ahmed and Dr Richard Barlow

Trainees: Dr Rooper Farooki, Dr Gavin Fong, Dr Ihsan Jibril, Dr Amy Livesey, Dr Conn McGrath, Dr Emma Porter (This group are pictured above.)

Is oral spironolactone effective and safe in treating acne vulgaris in the female adolescent population (12-17 years old)?

Mentors: Dr Esther Burden-Teh and Dr Susannah George

Trainees: Dr Fiona Sexton, Dr Myranda Attard, Dr Julia Fordham, Dr Zohra Moledina, Dr Lisa O'Higgins, Dr Grishma Ramesh

Are clean non-sterile medical examination gloves non-inferior to sterile gloves in preventing postoperative infections in minor skin surgical procedures?

Mentors: Dr Aaron Wernham and Dr Alistair Brown

Trainees: Dr Chris Puo Nen Lim, Dr Caterina Mendes Quaresma, Dr Radhika Bali, Dr Sumir Chawla, Dr Niamh McSwiney, Dr Nikesh Patel

Is metformin MR (1500mg once daily) and doxycycline (100mg twice daily) more effective than doxycycline (100mg twice daily) monotherapy in reducing the severity of HS in adults?

Mentors: Dr Jonathan Batchelor and Dr Marianne DeBrito

Trainees: Dr Ayesha Shahid, Dr Maya Aboluwarin, Dr Huda Al-Kutubi, Dr Nicola Kearney, Dr Emily Orr, Dr Lie Jie Helena Yoo

So helpful and brilliant to be working with a like-minded team. We will be progressing with research, thank you so much for the opportunity and encouragement Dr Roopa Farooki

This was genuinely such a wonderful introduction to research in clinical dermatology. The easy access to the mentors was by far the best aspect, they have been a great support and invaluable knowledge base. Dr Conn McGrath

UK DCTN GOVERNANCE

Executive Committee and Trustees

We are a registered charity (charity number 1115745) with Trustees who oversee and guide our activities. They have a wealth of experience in dermatology and clinical research and volunteer their time and expertise to further our research. The Trustees and Patient Representatives work together as the UK DCTN Executive Committee.

Jane Sterling	Independent Chair and Consultant Dermatologist
Beth Stuart	Chair of UK DCTN and Professor of Medical Statistics
Hywel Williams	Former Chair of UK DCTN and Professor of Dermato-Epidemiology
Carron Layfield	Treasurer and Manager of the UK DCTN
Kim Thomas	Professor of Applied Dermatology
Fiona Cowdell	Professor of Nursing
Rubeta Matin	Consultant Dermatologist
Nick Levell	Consultant Dermatologist

Patient Representatives on Executive and Steering Committees:

Tim Burton

Clare Baumhauer

Steering Committee

Members of the UK DCTN Steering Committee meet three times per year to provide feedback on submitted research proposals and provide advice on studies in development, as well as ongoing trials. The Steering Committee also includes the trustees and patient representatives (listed above), our UK DCTN Fellows for the duration of their award and our UK DCTN Trial Development Manager Laura Howells.

Rachel Abbott (D)	Carolyn Charman (D)	Yusur Al-Niami (D)
Lucy Bradshaw (S)	Evelyn Davies (D, DC)	Claudia de Giovanni (D)
Abby Macbeth (D)	Areti Makrygeorgou (D)	Tess McPherson (D)
Gayathri Perera (D)	Tracey Sach (H)	Debbie Shipley (D)
Mary Sommerlad (D)	Mel Westmoreland (N)	Aaron Wernham (D)
Sarah Worboys (G)	Helen Young (D)	Shyamal Wahie (D)
Zenas Yiu (D, DC)	Jo Searle (N)	Anna LaLonde (G)
Simi Sudhakaran (G)	Hannah Wainman (D)	Maanasa Polubothu (D)

Special thanks are extended to Tess McPherson and Helen Young who stepped down from the Steering Committee in 2024.

Key: Dermatologist (D); GP (G); Health Economist (H); Statistician (S); Nurse (N); Deputy Chair (DC)

PUBLICATIONS

Full trial publications

Alitretinoin versus phototherapy as the first-line treatment in adults with severe chronic hand eczema: the ALPHA trial

Health Technol Assess 2024 Oct;28(59):1-123.

Doi: [10.3310/TWQC0141](https://doi.org/10.3310/TWQC0141)

Chief Investigator: Dr Miriam Wittmann

What did they do?

ALPHA compared Alitretinoin and PUVA therapy in adults aged 18 years and over with severe hand eczema. Depending on their treatment response, patients were treated for 12-24 weeks and were followed up for a year from commencing the study. 441 participants were recruited in total, with 35 sites across the UK involved.

What did the study find out?

ALPHA demonstrated that as a first-line therapy, alitretinoin showed more rapid improvement and superiority to ultraviolet therapy at week 12 although this difference was not observed at later time points. A limitation of the study was poor compliance with ultraviolet therapy as most patients in this arm of the study did not receive the recommended twice weekly therapy.

Study Website: <https://ctru.leeds.ac.uk/alpha/>

This study was funded by the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) Health Technology Assessment Commissioned Call funding programme.

Other publications

Feasibility of daily pain measurement using text messages in hidradenitis suppurativa clinical trials; data from the THESEUS study

Samar B Hasan et al Br J Dermatol.

<https://doi.org/10.1093/bjd/ljae057>

A multifaceted and standardised approach is needed to improve acne severity assessment in clinical practice: an online survey of UK health professionals

Niamh Masterson et al Clin Exp Dermatol.

<https://doi.org/10.1093/ced/llae180>

Current prescribing for pyoderma gangrenosum in the UK and access to biologic medications: results from a UK Dermatology Clinical Trials Network survey of dermatologists

Myfanwy Jenkins et al Clin Exp Dermatol.

<https://doi.org/10.1093/ced/llae153>

The Eczema Bathing Study: Weekly versus daily bathing for people with eczema? Protocol of an online, randomised controlled trial

Wei Chern Gavin Fong et al NIHR Open Res

<https://doi.org/10.3310/nihropenres.13659.1>

Rapid Eczema Trials: Addressing patient priorities from the eczema priority setting partnership

Emma L. Campbell et al Br J Dermatol.

<https://doi.org/10.1093/bjd/ljae362>

CONTACT US

Post

UK DCTN
Centre for Evidence Based Dermatology
University of Nottingham,
Applied Health Research (Building 42)
University Park Campus,
Nottingham
NG7 2RD

Website

www.UKDCTN.org

X (Twitter)

@UK_DCTN

Email

UKDCTN@nottingham.ac.uk



The UK DCTN is kindly supported by the
British Association of Dermatologists and
the University of Nottingham



**BRITISH ASSOCIATION
OF DERMATOLOGISTS**
HEALTHY SKIN FOR ALL



**University of
Nottingham**
UK | CHINA | MALAYSIA