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## President's Message

The recent inaugural YOG games which was hosted by Singapore was a huge success. I must admit that I thoroughly enjoyed following the games on television and even had the opportunity to attend the tennis finals. Much has been said about the success of the event but special mention was made about the sacrifices and selflessness of the volunteers of the event. I experienced it first hand – their tireless dedication in making the event a success. The volunteers went about trying to make everything run smoothly, even in the hot weather and with the impatient crowds. They were the true heroes of the game.

The spirit of volunteerism is important, especially in a non-profit organization like the PAS. I am grateful for the committee and members who gave up their precious time to help out in the recent events. The recent public forum, with the launch of the new website, was well received. I hope that all of you will take the opportunity to log in to our new website and give us your feedback.

Lastly, the World Psoriasis Day event is around the corner again. It will be held on the 24 Oct and a road-show to educate the public has been planned. If you are keen to be a volunteer for the event, do let us know and will be most happy to have you on board! May the spirit of volunteerism be alive in our association!

God bless,

*Colin Theng*



## 28th Annual General Meeting

reported by Secretary, Valerie Poh Guat Hua

The 28TH Annual General Meeting was held on Saturday 17th July 2010. It was attended by 39 members. Before the AGM, the members watched an entertaining movie, "Shrek Forever After" followed by a sumptuous buffet lunch. The AGM commenced with a 'welcome address' by Dr. Colin Theng.

He informed the members of the coming events:

i) A public forum on 7th August 2010 at the Mandarin Hotel. The guest speaker is a renowned dermatologist from Australia, and the other speaker is a Consultant Dermatologist from National Skin Centre. Both will share information on the latest treatment for psoriasis. The forum is free for members and \$3 for non-members.

ii) The launch of the Psoriasis Association revamped web-site which is sponsored by Janssen-Cilag.

iii) World Psoriasis Day to be held on Oct. 24 at Anchorpoint.

Dr. Theng thanked Leo Pharma for sponsoring The Psoriasis Newsletter. He added the Newsletter was a good platform for members to share their personal experiences and made an appeal for more members to come forward with ideas and feedback.

The President thanked Michelle Kee for her generous donation of \$4900 to the Association. She has been most supportive in getting her friends to donate towards the Association Fund on her birthdays. From the Welfare Aid Fund \$1100 worth of vouchers were distributed to our needy members.

The Psoriasis Support Group met once in 2 months and an average of about 30 members attended, sharing their experiences and giving encouragement to one another.



Other activities carried out in 2009 included:

- i) A very successful World Psoriasis Day held on 24 Oct. 2009 at the East Coast Park.
- ii) A very enjoyable party for members held at Seoul Garden on 7th Feb 2010.
- iii) A successful public forum which created public awareness.
- iv) Our young member, Nurul, was interviewed by Berita Harian. The newspaper gave the interview full page coverage.

The President thanked Ego Pharmaceuticals for their generous sponsorship of the buffet lunch and door gifts.

The President then presented the Annual Report 2009/2010 which was confirmed by Mr. Benjamin Goh and seconded by Mr. Wong Foot Keng. This was followed by the Treasurer's Report which was also accepted and confirmed.

The new executive committee for 2010/2011 was announced.



## Psoriasis, Metabolic Syndrome and Beyond

**Dr Wong Su-Ni, Dermatologist, Mt Elizabeth Medical Centre**

A very common question patients often pose when first diagnosed with psoriasis is, "Is there anything I should avoid in my diet?" The standard answer was no, apart from cigarettes and alcohol. In recent years, however, emerging evidence has made me rethink dietary advice given to psoriasis patients.

Psoriasis has long been suspected of being more than just an inflammatory skin problem. Apart from affecting the skin, inflammation has also been reported to affect the joints, tendons and ligaments in up to 40% of psoriasis patients,

as well as being associated with inflammatory problems in the eyes. In recent years, psoriasis has also been reported to be associated with Metabolic Syndrome, a combination of conditions that include abdominal obesity, glucose intolerance, insulin resistance (leading to diabetes aka "high blood sugar"), high cholesterol and hypertension (high blood pressure). Psoriasis patients are up to 3 times as likely as non-psoriasis patients to have diabetes, hypertension and high cholesterol (Archives of Dermatology 2009). Psoriasis patients are also 3 times as likely to be smokers.

Having these conditions increases one's risk of developing a stroke (usually due to narrowing and clot in arteries supplying blood to the brain), ischaemic heart disease (where the heart arteries are narrowed or blocked and do not supply enough oxygen to the heart muscles, resulting in chest pain, heart attacks or even death) and peripheral vascular disease (narrowing of arteries in the legs or arms with reduced oxygen supply to the limbs). Being obese or having diabetes also increases the chances of having fatty liver, which may affect your treatment with drugs such as MTX oracitretin.

Since individuals with psoriasis have a higher risk of developing metabolic syndrome, it would make sense to adopt lifestyle changes that would reduce the chances of developing diabetes, hypertension, obesity and high cholesterol -- all considered diseases of affluence that are increasing in privileged societies with plenty to eat and increasingly sedentary lifestyle. Key components would include: low-salt diet (to reduce risk of hypertension), low fat and low cholesterol diet, low sugar/ low glycaemic index diet (to reduce chances of developing diabetes), stop smoking, and regular exercise (e.g. 1/2 hour brisk walking daily).

However, from more recent studies exploring the relationship of psoriasis itself with stroke, heart disease and peripheral vascular disease, it appears that the risk of developing heart disease, stroke and peripheral vascular disease is not just from having components of the metabolic syndrome, but may be related to psoriasis itself. The results have been eye-opening, and suggest that psoriasis may be considered a multi-system inflammatory disease, certainly more than just a skin-deep cosmetic nuisance.

Psoriasis has been reported to be an independent risk factor for stroke and peripheral vascular disease (where the arteries supplying blood to the legs and arms are narrowed, and the affected individual may experience coldness, colour changes and pain in the feet or hands, particularly with exercise, cold environment or elevation of the legs). In a study published in the Archives of Dermatology in 2009, the risk of stroke in psoriasis was 1.70 times that of non-psoriasis controls, and 1.98 times for peripheral vascular disease. The psoriasis subjects were matched with non-psoriasis subjects with similar characteristics (e.g. diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, smoking, age, sex). This would exclude diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, smoking, male sex and age as contributing factors in calculating risk. In another study published in the highly regarded Journal of Investigative Dermatology in 2009, patients with mild psoriasis were 1.06 times more likely than matched controls without psoriasis to develop a stroke, but this increased in severe psoriasis to 1.43 times.

Severe psoriasis has also been found to be an independent

risk factor for ischaemic heart disease. The risk of ischaemic heart disease was 1.78 times, or 78% increased, compared to matched individuals without psoriasis. In a study published in the European Heart Journal in 2010, 40-year old people with psoriasis were found to be 2.69 times more likely than 40-year old people without psoriasis to die from heart attack. In fact, a study published in the Archives of Dermatology in 2007 found that having psoriasis was associated with a 3 to 4-year reduction in life expectancy, similar to having high blood pressure.

The implications of these findings are vast and further trials need to be undertaken to address the questions raised, e.g. is the increase in heart disease and stroke due to inflammation in the blood vessels or from other processes? If it is due to inflammation in the vessels, would anti-inflammatory treatment such as MTX or the biologics help to reduce heart disease and stroke? Should we more readily prescribe systemic treatments, compared to the current approach of using creams and phototherapy first? As with many unanswered questions in medicine, we look forward to further research that would help shed light on the way psoriasis wrecks havoc on the body and ways to prevent or minimize them.

Meanwhile, we should consciously try to reduce other risk factors for heart disease and stroke, such as obesity, smoking, high cholesterol, high blood pressure and high blood sugar. While doctors will do their part in offering regular health screening and advising on a healthier lifestyle, it is up to the individual to adopt sustainable lifestyle changes such as regular exercise, smoking cessation and a healthy low-salt, low-fat and low-glycaemic index diet. A healthy diet is one that is low in fat, low in simple carbohydrates but emphasizes complex carbohydrates (e.g. wholemeal or multigrain bread rather than white bread, unpolished rice rather than white rice), high in fibre (fresh vegetables and fruits) and low in sugar. At Psoriasis Association of Singapore, we hope to partner you in achieving a balanced and healthier lifestyle.

## **Is my rash, Psoriasis? Public Forum**

**Written by Yanee**

**from LEO Pharma, event sponsor**

On 1 May 2010, LEO Pharma Singapore worked together with Dr. Colin Theng, president of The Psoriasis Association of Singapore (PAS) to organize a public forum with the aim of increasing the public interests on the disease and its management. The public forum was held in English and Mandarin sessions at York Hotel. A panel of speakers which comprises of Dr. Colin Theng, Dr. Lim Kar Seng and Dr. Chong Wei Sheng highlighted psoriasis as a common,



chronic systemic inflammatory disease which requires life-long management. At the end of the session, the speakers also conducted free skin screening for those who wanted to know whether they have the disease. How do we do it differently?

We attracted initial public interest to attend the public forum through local newspapers advertorial with a provocative question, "Is my rash Psoriasis?". A media interview was arranged for Dr. Colin Theng and Dr Chong Wei Sheng to answer frequently asked questions relating to the disease state, treatment options and care of psoriasis. The local newspapers, Straits Times and Lian He Zao Bao published their interview in the health section on 29 April and 30 April respectively. A short advertisement which informed the public to book their seats for the forum also appeared in the same column. All 300 seats were taken up by afternoon.

On the day of public forum, around 260 people attended the talk to learn about the disease, treatment options and product advancements in psoriasis field. The speakers highlighted all the treatment options available for the patients, ranging from topical, systemic and biological treatment. Daivobet® was among one of the topical treatment option recommended. They also demonstrated clearly the efficacy of some of the treatment options through before and after treatment clinical pictures taken from their own patients.



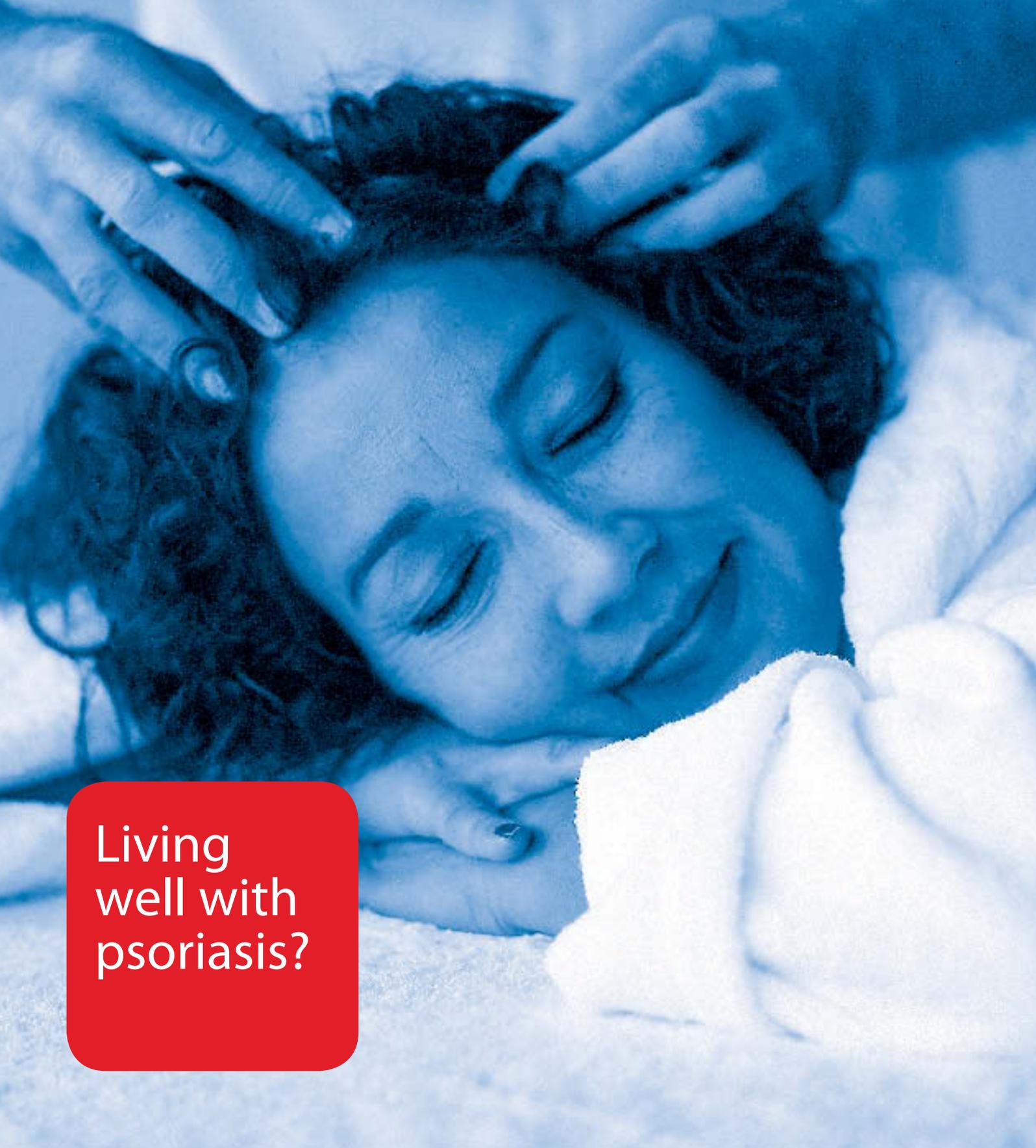
What do we learn?

The inaugural event boosted PAS's and LEO's image as it demonstrated the commitment to deliver value adding services to the psoriasis patients.

From the feedback gathered, the event generated a lot of interests from the public towards the disease and the treatment options. There were also a number of people signing up for the PAS membership at the booth.

LEO would like to thank PAS for the opportunity given in the collaboration, and the doctors, Dr Colin Theng, Dr Lim Kar Seng and Dr Chong Wei Sheng for their assistance in conducting the talks. Not forgetting the committee members of PAS for all the support rendered to us.





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well with  
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