



THE AUSTRALASIAN COLLEGE  
OF DERMATOLOGISTS

**MEDIA RELEASE**

**14 OCTOBER 2019**

## **NEW REPORT ON AUSTRALIAN HEALTHCARE SYSTEM**

The Australasian College of Dermatologists (ACD) is launching a report entitled 'More than skin deep: Skin diseases in Australia – navigating the healthcare system' to mark its second World Skin Health Day on 14 October 2019.

President of the ACD, Associate Professor David Francis says: "Skin diseases including skin cancer are amongst the most common human illnesses. Skin disorders rank sixth of all disease groups for non-fatal burden of disease in Australia. Almost a million people in Australia - over 4% of the population - suffer from a long-term skin condition. However, accessing timely, affordable, relevant and ongoing care for skin conditions is essential, and can lead to improved patient outcomes."

The College report examines the impact of chronic skin conditions from the patient perspective, their psychosocial impacts in the form of stigma and discrimination, and challenges with access. It has been developed in collaboration with dermatology patient support groups for eczema, psoriasis, gorlin syndrome, vitiligo, allergy and anaphylaxis, epidermolysis bullosa, melanoma and alopecia.

Michelle, mother of ten-years old Ryder, who has been battling with Ryder's eczema since he was four months old says: "When I first noticed the rash, I knew it did not look right. I did what any mother would do in that situation- I called in a home doctor to see if there was some kind of relief for Ryder. The first doctor, one of many over the years, diagnosed Ryder with roseola and stated there was nothing that could be done about the rash. A week later I was able to see my regular General Practitioner (GP), who informed me that Ryder did not have roseola but instead had eczema."

Through a series of patient interviews College found consistent themes: accessing help can be challenging and frustrating and stigma and discrimination is often associated with their skin conditions. The report explores these issues in detail and considers solutions for key stakeholders involved in the Australian Health Care system.

A/Prof Francis says: "Increasing awareness of what dermatologists do is incredibly important, so that patients are empowered to seek specialist care appropriately. We are extremely grateful to the patients who shared their stories with us about their journey to access dermatology care. We have a long way to go to make sure that everyone can get the care they need, especially in regional and rural areas. Government support is critical so we can provide equal access to healthcare for all Australian communities".

Leanne says: "When I got my first [bald] patch at about 15 years, I went to my GP and he referred me to a dermatologist. We were in a regional area and have always resided in Shepparton, 2 hours north of Melbourne. We didn't have a dermatologist in Shepparton so I was referred to a dermatologist in Melbourne".

Ensuring Australia has enough dermatologists in the years ahead is vital to addressing access issues. More outreach services and funding allocated to public hospitals for dermatology services and training will be essential to address these issues in the future.

**ENDS**

### **More information**

World Skin Health Day aims to recognise and promote skin health around the world. This is a joint project of International League of Dermatological Societies (ILDS) and the International Society of Dermatology (ISD).



This year the World Skin Health Day at the Australasian College of Dermatologists is aimed at highlighting the challenges faced by patients to access appropriate dermatological care.

The launch of this report is supported by videos that inform the community about dermatologists and the conditions they treat, and empowering viewers to access specialist care when it is needed. The videos also focus on the projected dermatology workforce shortage, urging government to allocate more funding to train more dermatologists to improve timely access especially in rural and regional areas of Australia. They can be found on the College website and You Tube channel.

### **Links to further information**

World Skin Health Day Report: [More Than Skin Deep: Skin diseases in Australia – navigating the healthcare](#)

World Skin Health Day [Videos](#)

[A-Z of Skin](#)

[Find a local dermatologist](#)

For further information on the ACD, visit [www.dermcoll.edu.au](http://www.dermcoll.edu.au), or see our updates on [Facebook](#) Twitter at [@DermatologyACD](#) Instagram [@acderm](#) or [LinkedIn](#)

### **About the Australasian College of Dermatologists (ACD):**

The ACD is the peak medical college accredited by the Australian Medical Council for the training and professional development of medical practitioners in the specialty of dermatology. They provide authoritative information about dermatology to Government, the media, other health professionals and the general public.

### **Acknowledgement**

The ACD acknowledges the individuals who participated in the development of this paper, providing their time to share their stories and experiences about their healthcare journey. Their support and assistance in the development of this paper is greatly appreciated.

The ACD acknowledges the following patient support groups who contributed to this paper:

- [Allergy and Anaphylaxis Australia](#)
- [Australia Alopecia Areata Foundation Inc.](#)
- [Eczema Association Australasia](#)
- [Eczema Support Australia](#) (formerly Hands to Hold)
- [Gorlins Syndrome](#)
- [Psoriasis Australia](#)
- [Vitiligo Association of Australia](#)
- [DEBRA Australia](#)
- [Melanoma Patients Australia](#)
- [Skin and Cancer Foundation INC](#)
- [Melanoma and Skin Cancer Trials Ltd](#)

### **Media enquiries:**

For more information, images, or to arrange an interview with a dermatologist, please contact:



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