NEW DERMATOLOGY RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING ANTIBIOTICS

The Australasian College of Dermatologists (ACD) is pleased to announce its support of Choosing Wisely Australia®. The initiative of NPS Medicinewise enables health providers, consumers and healthcare stakeholders to start important conversations about unnecessary tests, treatments and procedures, where evidence shows they provide no benefit.

Today, as part of the ACD’s new partnership with Choosing Wisely Australia®, the ACD has released five new positions statements. Three of the ACD’s five recommendations, introduce new guidelines to ensure the appropriate use of antibiotics in: lower limb bilateral redness and swelling; epidermal cysts; and acne vulgaris.

Associate Professor, Chris Baker, President of the ACD, says:

“The ACD supports the important goals of Choosing Wisely Australia®. One of the challenges of modern medicine is that, with the complexity of tests, treatments and procedures, not all add value to the patient. There are always areas where we can improve our healthcare system. Choosing Wisely Australia® provides the tools and support to discuss what tests and treatments are needed, and avoid those that are unnecessary or lead to harm.

“For instance, antibiotic resistance - when bacteria change so antibiotics are no longer effective and may not be useful to treat infections in the future – is a major issue in healthcare and has consequences worldwide. We found that, when identifying examples of unnecessary treatments in the dermatology area, antibiotics came up a few times and, as a result, we are outlining new guidelines.”

The ACD recommends caution before dermatologists prescribe antibiotics in three key areas.

1. **Bilateral redness and swelling of both lower legs:**
   Do not assume that bilateral redness and swelling of both lower legs is due to infection. Antibiotics should not be prescribed unless there is clear clinical evidence of infection, followed up by confirmatory microbiology. Bilateral leg cellulitis is very rare. Most commonly, the bilateral inflammation is due to underlying skin disease such as venous eczema, dry skin, irritant or allergic contact dermatitis, or secondary lymphoedema.

2. **Epidermal cysts:**
   Antibiotics should not be prescribed for inflamed epidermal cysts unless infection is confirmed via microbiology test results. These inflammatory cysts are rarely infected. In most cases, the redness, swelling tenderness is secondary to inflammation caused by the cyst contents and will respond to incision and drainage plus/minus intralesional corticosteroids.

3. **Acne vulgaris:**
Systemic antibiotic monotherapy should not be prescribed for acne vulgaris. To reduce further development of antibiotic resistance, combine with topical antiseptics such as benzoyl peroxide. Differentiating acne vulgaris from other forms of folliculitis is necessary prior to instituting acne therapy.

“For some conditions, antibiotics aren’t always the best treatment available. More than 50% of Propionibacterium acne species are resistant to the tetracycline and macrolide antibiotics used in the treatment of acne. The antibiotics do however have a therapeutic anti-inflammatory effect in acne even though their antibacterial efficacy is diminished as a result of the emergence of resistant strains. Topical Benzoyl Peroxide has an antibacterial effect so using the two agents together allows us to continue to treat mild to moderate acne.”

The ACD also released new position statements on: the use of topical or systemic anti-fungal medication for patients with thickened, distorted toenails; and the investigation and treatment of acute urticaria (hives).

Dr Robyn Lindner from NPS MedicineWise and Choosing Wisely Australia® says:

“We are delighted to now have 20 Colleges, societies and associations participating in Choosing Wisely Australia. Choosing Wisely Australia is supporting consumers and health professionals to initiate frank discussions about what care is truly needed and appropriate. Not all tests, treatments and procedures are in the patient’s best interests. The right choice should be based on the best available evidence and discussion between the consumer and health provider.”

For further information on the ACD, visit www.dermcoll.edu.au or see our updates on Facebook or Twitter @DermatologyACD #Dermatology

ENDS

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.

Media enquiries

For more information, images, or to arrange an interview with a dermatologist, please contact S2i Communications.

Linsey Brown
Senior Account Director & GM
S2i Communications
+61 2 9262 4766
Linsey@s2i.com.au

Annaliese Vella
Account Manager
S2i Communications
+61 2 9262 4766
Annaliese@s2i.com.au