The Australasian College of Dermatologists (ACD) Annual Scientific Meeting (ASM) wrapped up yesterday in Sydney with a series of sessions on what’s new in dermatology.

Dr Haady Fallah presented on several medications that have recently been approved in United States of America and may be available in Australia shortly.

Dr Haady Fallah, dermatologist with the ACD says: “The new medication, dupilumab, represents an important breakthrough in the treatment of eczema (atopic dermatitis). To date, our options in treating patients with severe dermatitis have been quite limited. Phase III trials of dupilumab have shown that almost 40% of patients on this medication had an IGA score of 0 or 1 after 16 weeks of treatment, meaning that their condition was clear or almost clear after 16 weeks of treatment.”

Dr Fallah also presented new data showing that survival in Stage III melanoma patients can be improved by using the medication ipilimumab as adjuvant therapy after surgery.

Dr Fallah says: “This new data is exciting because adjuvant therapy options in patients with Stage III melanoma have been quite limited to date. Existing approved therapies provide minimal benefit and are associated with significant side effects. However, a recent study published in the New England Journal of Medicine showed that adjuvant therapy with ipilimumab significantly improves overall survival for patients with these high risk melanomas.”

Dr Fallah also presented new data on a possible association between statins (the most commonly prescribed anti-cholesterol medication) and shingles, a condition associated with a painful rash that results from reactivation of the chicken pox virus.

Dr Li-Chuen Wong presented the most exciting new advances paediatric dermatology.

Dr Li-Cheun Wong, dermatologist with the ACD says: “A very interesting new treatment for eczema, recently approved in America in December, is Crisaborole, trade name Eucrisa. Because of its low molecular weight, Crisaborole penetrates the skin well and is rapidly absorbed. Its place will most likely be alongside tacrolimus as a steroid sparing topical agent, particularly good for usage on the face and other sensitive skin areas.”

Dr Wong says: “For of alopecia areata, the use of Janus kinase (JAK) inhibitors for biologic treatment is a new therapy. Craiglow looked at the response of 13 adolescent patients with alopecia areata treated with oral tofacitinib. 70% patients showed clinically significant hair regrowth. Despite the small sample size, results are promising. However, more prospective clinical trials are needed in the paediatric population.”

Dr Wong says: “Apart from dupilumab and crisaborole, the fact that meta-analysis of data has shown that isotretinoin treatment doesn’t appear to be associated with an increased risk for depression is a big breakthrough. In fact, the treatment of acne shows to improve the mood and relieve distress in acne patients.”

Dr Jo-Ann See presented on further developments in the acne area.
Dr Jo-Ann See dermatologist with the ACD says: “We are the first country in the Asia-Pacific to be using the new topical agents of dapsone, known as Aczone, for acne (especially adult acne); the new adapalene and benzoyl peroxide fixed combination, called Epiduo forte for severe acne fixed preparation; and a biophotonic gel called Kleresca. It is an exciting time to be working in acne as new developments become reality in 2017 after years of research and development.”

The other take home point was that recent studies indicate that a high GI (Glycemic Index) diets may be associated with acne.

Links to further information

Annual Scientific Meeting website
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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.

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