

Lynita

Hello, and welcome to the podcast. Joining me today are four other members of the global parents for eczema research team. They recently attended the American academy of dermatology or AAD conference in San Diego. The AAD conference is a great opportunity to hear about the latest treatments, meet researchers and ask questions in seminars that are important to parents. It is also a chance to build relationships with other patient organizations.

Kara, Christine, Korey and Michelle. Welcome to the podcast.

Kara, this was your first time attending AAD. What was it like to be there?

Kara

Yes, this was my first attendance at the American Academy of Dermatology conference. It was really interesting to not only hear about the research, but to learn more about the people behind the research and what's important to them. It was also really interesting to kind of see a vision of what my future could possibly look like as a dermatologist and learning how I can participate in research while also staying grounded in my really true heart that lies with the kids and children who went through what I went through with the condition as I was growing up.

Lynita

Thanks Kara. Christine, you've attended a few conferences now on behalf of GPER. What makes this meeting unique?

Christine

I feel like you're able to put your voice out there where I feel it's most needed.

Lynita

It's so great that you can bring the parent voice and patient voice to these meetings. Korey, you've made a huge effort to get five of our team members to AAD conference this year. What makes this meeting so special?

Korey

So this year the meeting was in California, which is where we're based and we have quite a few staff members in California as well. So it was a unique opportunity to get us out in force. A. A. D. As it's known for short, it is the largest gathering of dermatologists in the world. So 20,000 dermatologists were there over one weekend. It's absolutely massive. But it's also attended by patient groups, people who make treatments for eczema, researchers... So anyone who's interested in eczema is at this meeting and it's this great efficient opportunity for us to connect with people interested in eczema over a very short period of time. And with five people there, we were really able to do that this year.

Lynita

Fantastic. What was the most interesting thing that you learned at the conference this year?

Korey

Yeah, there were a couple of things for me. It was helpful to hear how many new treatments are coming. And there's literally dozens of them you know, for so long, there was a drought with eczema treatments, and it's definitely over.

We heard about two that are likely to be approved in the USA this year. So in 2024 for adolescents and adults, not the young kids yet, but that will be coming soon. And those two are Lebrikizumab and Nemolizumab. Now these work in slightly different ways, but both are injectable drugs. Like the two we already have on the market Dupilumab or Dupixent and Tralokinumab also called Abry.

Nemolizumab is interesting because it targets a different receptor than Dupixent, one called IL 31, and this drug works really well against itch, which we know is so important for patients. Nemolizumab, is already approved in Japan and will be considered by the FDA for moderate to severe eczema in adolescents and adults this year, just as a reminder.

The second one, Lebrikizumab, is more similar to the drugs that we already have on the market. Because it targets one of the same areas of the immune system. The IL13 receptor. And it's showing similar results, I would say, but it may have the edge because it could require fewer doses, maybe just once a month. So that is one to watch and we expect it to be approved for adolescents this year in 2024.

Lynita

Fantastic. Are there any new topical treatments, treatments that are just applied to the skin that we should look out for?

Korey

Yeah, there are two here that are coming soon, Tapinerof and Roflumilast. And these two therapies join the recently approved Ruxolitinib cream as kind of new kids on the block in the topical medication space.

Tapinerof is interesting because it can be used for moderate to severe eczema. Which is unusual in the topical medication space. The main side effect that we're seeing with Tapinerof is headache in some patients. And these are not steroids. So we don't have to worry about things like skin thinning and some of the other side effects that we see with steroids.

And the part that was most interesting to me is there was one speaker at this symposium who really made the case that even moderate to severe eczema could now be managed with just topical medications. So they may not need to go on to a biologic or even further along with a pill like a JAK inhibitor because these are more effective. And they can be tapered according to the skin clearance. So, they're actually more flexible in some ways in terms of how we can treat the moderate to severe folks. So that's definitely something to watch. So those were the main takeaways I had on the treatment front. And I can also talk a little bit more about some of the research highlights in addition to this new treatment news, but I'll let my coworkers go first.

Lynita

Thanks Korey. And Christine, what was the most interesting thing for you at the conference?

I have to agree with Korey, with the exciting treatments that are coming out. There's quite a few, there are options outside of an injection. It was pretty exciting for me because my son, even though he's well managed now with a topical I'm not naive to know that he will hit puberty at some point, and that might change the trajectory of our treatment. So to know that there is still potentially a non injection option in the pipeline is kind of a sigh of relief for me.

Lynita

Excellent. And Kara, what about you? What did you find most interesting?

Kara

One analogy that I heard that I think was particularly intriguing was AD is like the roof is on fire. So the outermost layer of your skin. But that's not it, it's everything under that that's being systemically affected as well. So the understanding of eczema as a systemic disease was also very much highlighted throughout the conference. And then another thing that I also took away was the connection potentially to your gut health and the speaker had said something like: It's a skin disease, but we also realize that we have skin on our inside, which is like the lining of our esophagus or any part of our digestive system. So I think learning how everything is in connection with one another was really interesting,

Lynita

Thank you. And a lot of new, interesting research is coming through about how it is all interlinked between the gut and the skin and our airways. So yeah, I'm looking forward to seeing where that research leads. Michelle, what did you find during your time at AAD?

Michelle

Learning more about diversity within clinical trials, to get a greater landscape on how treatments work across different demographics as we also represent a global organization. I think there needs to be more work done in this area. Even if companies are able to provide these resources, people need to be able to access them in the 1st place.

Lynita

Absolutely. Yes. An important piece of the puzzle that should not be overlooked. Korey, let's talk about research highlights and what you would like to keep an eye on this year.

Korey

Yeah, so there were a couple of talks that were more strictly on research that I found particularly intriguing this year. One was actually by a pediatric dermatologist at New York University, Dr. Vikash Oza. And he really outlined what we know about the manifestation of eczema in the very early childhood years, the baby years. So he talked about how if a baby develops cradle cap, which is that crusty scalp dryness that you see in a lot of babies, those babies are going to

develop eczema. And we know that now. And then how it always shows up first on the cheeks in a child, because the cheek area of the skin moisturizing factor, which makes it very prone to AD.

So we're really starting to understand how eczema begins and what to look for in those babies, which I think is super important. Dr. Oza also talked about a few of the most promising strategies we have for preventing eczema, which of course is a huge focus and interest of Global Parents for Eczema Research. And so he talked about early probiotic supplementation. moisturizer therapy in the infant years, which we've talked about at our symposium this year. And he also talked about strategies to address water hardness and ongoing research in that area. So this is a story that I think we need to watch over the coming year as these, studies unfold.

The second bit of research that I found fascinating came from Dr. Tissa Hata and she's at University of California, San Diego. So Dr. Hata studies the skin microbiome and its importance in eczema or AD, and her research has shown that eczema prone skin is scarce in this certain type of protective bacteria called *Staph epidermidis* and is really responsible for keeping a more problematic bacteria called *Staph aureus* at bay and *Staph aureus* is commonly on the skin of people with eczema, and we believe it plays a role in making it worse.

So this protective bacteria, the *Staph epidermidis*, could be applied to the skin early in life to keep eczema from escalating. And her line of research, I think, is going to be really exciting and interesting, and for sure something that we'll be watching this year. So those were two, I think, intriguing areas on the research front that resonated with me at AAD this year.

Lynita

Thank you. Yeah, the microbiome, whether it's on the skin or in our gut, or even in our airways, seems to be the frontier of research at the moment. And I really hope it's going to explain to us what's really going on with the root causes of eczema. And Christine.

Christine

I attended the IEC symposium and Dr. Robert Bissonnette, a dermatologist in Canada spoke on when to treat patients with a topical versus a systemic treatment. Understanding whether it's beneficial to start out with a systemic based on their severity or a topical.

Lynita

Kara, what would you like to be tracking over the next year?

Kara

One of the scientific breakthrough sessions that I attended there was a talk that focused on a new class of injectables, and basically they were saying that the, the treatment in particular has potential for people to experience periods of remission, which basically means that they should have pretty good quality skin clearance as well as reduction of itch for a while, and I think that's very exciting just because something to provide remission it's kind of unheard of and maybe even something that we did not want to be said just because it just seems so outlandish, but

now that we're talking about potential treatments that are being developed that could have these effects. I think that's something definitely to watch within the coming years, especially,

Korey

Yeah, and just to build on what Kara said, these are a new class of drugs that are what we call OX40 targeted drugs and, that's going to take a few years for those to get to the approval stage probably, but they are working their way through phase two and phase three clinical trials. Very exciting that patients could take them for a while and then stop and see the same maintenance and symptom control. So I agree with her that that's a very interesting and exciting area.

Lynita

Michelle, was there anything that you're going to be following from this conference?

Michelle

Yeah many individuals discuss that the feeling of itch was more profound than the feeling of pain. So, I think this will be interesting as there was a lot of discussion among how to accurately measure itch and trying to incorporate more specific measures in the clinical trials.

Lynita

Christine, as a parent, is there any key takeaway for parents?

Christine

Stay hopeful, because there's a lot of things in the pipeline that are coming out for eczema treatments. But also to understand that there are more caring people than we might think at times.

Lynita

One sentence that summarized your experience at AAD. Kara.

Kara

My experience at AAD 2024 was definitely eye opening, inspiring, but also it made me reflect a lot on my own experiences. As someone who had severe AD when they were younger and who also sees a future not only as a clinician, but also within patient advocacy. So it was a really great experience overall, and I'm incredibly grateful for GPER, the team, and everyone that took the time to speak with us.

Lynita

Korey?

Korey

This meeting was special because we did have such a big presence there for Global Parents for Eczema Research and we work largely virtually. So it's a treat for us to get to see each other and discuss the research in person and spend time together. I guess if I had to summarize it in a sentence I would say that there's a lot of research on new treatments for eczema, and the

exciting thing is that these new treatments, as we understand how they work, are starting to unlock the mysteries of eczema itself.

So we're starting to understand what is wrong in the immune system, which is leading to this condition. And as we understand that, we're going to be able to understand hopefully how to prevent it, which is, of course, the goal of Global Parents for Eczema Research. So I left very hopeful that there will be not only ways to treat this condition to reduce suffering, but hopefully in the future, ways to prevent it in kids.

Lynita

Fantastic. Well, thank you everyone for taking time out to talk to me about your experiences. It was so lovely to see photos of the GPER staff all together, and hopefully one day I'll get to join you there.

Korey

Hope so. Thank you, Lynita.

Christine

Thank you Lynita.