

# PSORIASIS IN THE WORKPLACE:

## WHY IT MATTERS TO EMPLOYERS

A delay in psoriasis treatment is a delay in quality of life.

“We’ve come a long way with psoriasis treatments compared with ten years ago, or even five years ago. Now we have some treatments that are extraordinary,” says Dr. Yves Poulin, Assistant Clinical Professor of Dermatology at the Hôtel-Dieu de Québec.

This is hopeful news for working Canadians living with psoriasis, considering the debilitating physical pain and heavy emotional toll often caused by the condition.<sup>i</sup> In fact, almost 6 in ten people with psoriasis (59 per cent) attributed job loss or an inability to find employment for certain periods to the effects of psoriasis or its treatment.<sup>iii</sup>

In addition to the painful and itchy lesions that can crack and bleed,<sup>iv</sup> people living with psoriasis commonly suffer from poor self-esteem and high levels of psychological stress.<sup>v</sup> These consequences negatively impact social function, interpersonal relationships and productivity at work.<sup>vi</sup>

Psoriasis can be challenging to treat because what works for one person may not work for another.<sup>vii</sup> According to Dr. Poulin, “Perhaps the big problem is that people will lose hope that we can control their disease. They’re going to think that there’s nothing we can do going forward.”<sup>viii</sup>

Dr. Poulin describes great urgency around getting patients access to the right medication. “Psoriasis is a disease which has a profound impact on the individuals who have it,” he

explains. “Quality of life is affected. If you delay appropriate treatment in a patient, you are affecting his or her overall life.”<sup>ix</sup>

**So what are the latest developments in psoriasis care?** Dr. Poulin identifies key highlights in what he sees as a “revolution in the treatment of psoriasis”:

- Biotherapies, which are given by injection under the skin, are the most advanced treatments for psoriasis. Right now in Canada, there are six biotherapies.<sup>x</sup>
- It typically takes three months to determine if a patient is responding to a therapy.<sup>xii</sup> Newer biologics work very quickly, bringing excellent results after two or three weeks.<sup>xiii</sup>
- With certain new therapies, clearance can be as high as 90 per cent or even 100 per cent, which is “extraordinary.”<sup>xiv</sup>
- There are biologics that inhibit interleukin-17A, a protein that plays a pivotal role in driving underlying inflammation in psoriasis.<sup>xv</sup>

It is important for plan sponsors to know what is available for employees living with psoriasis. Dr. Poulin believes in the value of raising awareness: “I really think that it’s in the patients’ interest to be informed of the treatments available, as well as physicians. They need to know. We have to work with the new treatments, get to know them. For patients, that really has a profound influence.”<sup>xvi</sup>

<sup>i</sup> Dr. Poulin transcript, page 3, 00:07:46;25. <sup>ii</sup> Canadian Dermatology Association, What is Psoriasis? <http://www.dermatology.ca/skin-hair-nails/skin/psoriasis/#/skin-hair-nails/skin/psoriasis/what-is-psoriasis/> accessed September 8, 2016. <sup>iii</sup> Canadian Guidelines for the Management of Plaque Psoriasis, 1st Edition, June 2009, page 80 <http://www.dermatology.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/cdnpsoriasisguidelines.pdf>, accessed August 31, 2016. <sup>iv</sup> Canadian Dermatology Association, What is Psoriasis? <http://www.dermatology.ca/skin-hair-nails/skin/psoriasis/#/skin-hair-nails/skin/psoriasis/what-is-psoriasis/> accessed August 31, 2016. <sup>v</sup> Canadian Guidelines for the Management of Plaque Psoriasis, 1st Edition, June 2009, page 79 <http://www.dermatology.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/cdnpsoriasisguidelines.pdf>, accessed August 31, 2016. <sup>vi</sup> Canadian Guidelines for the Management of Plaque Psoriasis, 1st Edition, June 2009, page 79 <http://www.dermatology.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/cdnpsoriasisguidelines.pdf>, accessed August 31, 2016. <sup>vii</sup> Canadian Psoriasis Network, Treatment <http://www.cpn-rcp.com/what-is-psoriasis/treatment-options/>, accessed August 31, 2016. <sup>viii</sup> Dr. Poulin transcript, page 4, 00:11:08;28. <sup>ix</sup> Dr. Poulin transcript, page 3, 00:06:32;05. <sup>x</sup> Dr. Poulin transcript, page 4, 00:08:09;25. <sup>xi</sup> Dr. Poulin transcript, page 2, 00:03:09;11. <sup>xii</sup> Dr. Poulin transcript, page 2-3, 00:04:45;14. <sup>xiii</sup> Dr. Poulin transcript, page 2, 00:03:57;17. <sup>xiv</sup> Dr. Poulin transcript, page 3, 00:07:29;01. <sup>xv</sup> Krueger JG, Fretzin S, Suárez-Fariñas M, et al. IL-17A is essential for cell activation and inflammatory gene circuits in subjects with psoriasis. *J Allergy Clin Immunol.* 2012;130(1):145-54. <sup>xvi</sup> Dr. Poulin transcript, page 4, 00:11:24;00.