

# DOUBLE JEOPARDY: THE HUMAN IMPACT OF PSORIATIC ARTHRITIS



Living with psoriatic arthritis has changed more than just Ian Weaver's physical health.

**IAN WEAVER, 31, SPENT HIS HIGH SCHOOL YEARS COVERED IN SKIN PLAQUES.** Mistakenly diagnosed with eczema in his youth, he was ultimately told that he had psoriasis but was not offered any support to manage the condition. "I just dealt with it," remembers Ian.

Over the months that followed, he tried various prescription creams and ointments, without being told that his disease might progress, or that he could suffer flare-ups. For him, that meant thinned, red skin followed by a build-up of scaly plaques so thick that his arms would crack and bleed when he moved.

He feared leaving the house, wore long sleeves throughout the summer heat, and, as he describes it, "felt like a monster."

While his disease was worsening, Ian worked hard to build his career as a chef, putting in long hours in the kitchen to obtain his Red Seal. By the time he had become a head chef in 2011, plaques covered over 80 per cent of his body; the small vials of cream he had barely covered a fraction of his body.

Eventually, Ian was told he could no longer handle food, so he had to abandon a career he loved, and had worked so hard to build. He took a job in a call centre.

Already feeling defeated, Ian started to notice pain and inflammation in his joints. Within the same year, Ian was diagnosed with psoriatic arthritis, PsA, and virtually every aspect of his life was affected.

"I was in my 20s but moving like an elderly man – it took me half an hour to get from my car to my desk. We had to rent a wheelchair, and we bought an SUV because it was too difficult to get in and out of my car," he says.

"My wife had to wait on me hand and foot, helping me in and out of bed. I couldn't help but think that she would have been better off without me."

## WHAT IS PSORIATIC ARTHRITIS?

PsA is a type of chronic inflammatory arthritis which can affect people who have psoriasis.<sup>1</sup> The impact of PsA can vary from person to person, but the disease generally causes pain, swelling and stiffness in the joints, along with red scaly plaques (psoriasis) of the skin.<sup>1</sup>

It affects men and women equally, with onset typically happening between the ages of 20 and 50, and it can cause damage to careers and personal relationships.<sup>1</sup>

Ian is not alone in his experience. It is estimated that up to one million Canadians are affected by psoriasis and up to 30 per cent of people with psoriasis will develop psoriatic arthritis.<sup>1,2</sup>

Treatments for PsA have improved over the years with the introduction of disease-modifying antirheumatic drugs and biologics, but many patients continue to struggle to find treatments that work for them and meet their individual goals.

As Ian slid deeper into depression, he was at last referred to a rheumatologist and started a new type of treatment called biologics; the treatment option came just in time.

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Ian Weaver

worked – some would work for a short time, but then taper off; others didn't work at all," recalls Ian.

"I learned that what works for one person might not work for another. And while I was learning this, advancements were being made, and more and more treatments were becoming available."

## THE PSA CARE TEAM

"Psoriasis is not just skin deep," says Dr. Dafna Gladman, a leading researcher and rheumatologist in Toronto. But because psoriasis typically affects the skin before it affects the joints, many patients do not realize the disease can progress.

Gladman continues: "Both psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis are associated with serious comorbidities linked to the severity of their disease, including cardiovascular disease, diabetes and depression. In my experience, the earlier I treat a psoriatic arthritis patient, the better they respond to treatment."

"Studies also show that early diagnosis can help patients avoid complications of their disease," says Dr. Gladman. "Patients with psoriasis should tell their doctor about other symptoms they experience as they could be indications of psoriatic arthritis."

Dr. Kim Papp, who is a leading researcher and dermatologist based in Waterloo, Ontario, adds, "Patients often feel restricted by their joint pain and their skin plaques. They feel they cannot fully participate in everyday tasks or share moments with their loved ones — it may be because of the pain or it may be their skin is rough, inflamed and sore."

Some people may prefer to shy away from social settings if their disease is not well managed, or if their symptoms physically limit them.

"My role as a member of a person's care team," he continues, "is to understand all the needs of my patients, in order to improve their physical and emotional well-being."

PsA is multi-faceted, which makes it imperative for patients to work closely with their healthcare providers – both a rheumatologist and a dermatologist – to identify an effective treatment to reach their treatment goals.

## PSORIATIC ARTHRITIS: THEN AND NOW

Diagnosis and treatment of PsA has changed significantly over the years. Physicians' ability to control the disease activity was more limited prior to the introduction of targeted biologic medications in the early 2000s.<sup>3</sup>

Now, people also have better access to online resources that can help them recognize their own symptoms. Over time, our understanding of the condition has changed.

While it was once thought to be a rare, slowly progressing disease, PsA is now understood to be heterogeneous and progressive, and to some times lead to severe outcomes.<sup>4</sup>

With more advanced treatment options available, most patients can better control their disease and experience an improved quality of life.

But despite these advances, more still needs to be done. In a recent study, over 35 per cent of people living with PsA were impaired in

work productivity.<sup>5</sup>

Patients require earlier diagnosis and close monitoring to prevent poor outcomes, including joint deformities, which can significantly affect their quality of life.<sup>6</sup> Stigma also continues to surround the disease.

## NEW HOPE, BETTER OUTCOMES

Today, Ian sees both a rheumatologist and a dermatologist who work closely together as part of his care team. He exemplifies the impact proper treatment can have, and now enjoys photography, takes aquafit classes twice a week with his wife, and pursues his passion for food by cooking for family and friends.

"I would encourage people who find themselves in my position to be proactive — do your homework, find a care team that's willing to acknowledge your needs, and keep pushing until you find something that works," says Ian.

## LILLY'S COMMITMENT TO AUTOIMMUNE RESEARCH

Eli Lilly Canada is proud to be a partner in the treatment of autoimmune disorders, including PsA. Lilly has spent more than 140 years bringing new medicines to people with medical conditions, so they can reclaim their lives.

"Canadian patients have experienced gaps in treatment and care, so we're proud to have the opportunity to make a meaningful impact in immunology," says Boris Janos, Principal Clinical Research Scientist at Lilly Canada.

"Lilly is committed to the development of innovative treatments in immunology that can improve patients' symptoms and their quality of life," he said.

## RESOURCES

<sup>1</sup> Arthritis Society. What is psoriatic arthritis? Available at: [https://www.arthritis.ca/about-arthritis/arthritis-types-\(a-z\)/types/psoriatic-arthritis](https://www.arthritis.ca/about-arthritis/arthritis-types-(a-z)/types/psoriatic-arthritis). Accessed April 18, 2018.

<sup>2</sup> Papp K, Valenzuela F, Poulin Y, Bernstein G, Wasel N. Epidemiology of moderate-to-severe plaque psoriasis in a Canadian surveyed population. *J Cutan Med Surg.* 2010;14(4):167-74.

<sup>3</sup> Mease P. A short history of biological therapy for psoriatic arthritis. *Clin Exp Rheumatol.* 2015;33(5 Suppl 93):S104-8.

<sup>4</sup> Decision Resource Group. Highlights of Psoriatic Arthritis Studies at the 2016 American College of Rheumatology Annual Meeting. Available at: <https://decisionresourcesgroup.com/drg-blog/highlights-psoriatic-arthritis-studies-2016-american-college-rheumatology-annual-meeting/>. Accessed April 30, 2018.

<sup>5</sup> Kennedy M, Papneja A, Thavaneswaran A, Chandran V, Gladman DD. Prevalence and predictors of reduced work productivity in patients with psoriatic arthritis. *Clin Exp Rheumatol.* 2014;32(3):342-8.

<sup>6</sup> Gladman DD, Ritchlin C. Patient Education: Psoriatic arthritis (Beyond the Basics). UpToDate website. Available at: <https://www.uptodate.com/contents/psoriatic-arthritis-beyond-the-basics>. Accessed May 7, 2018.

<sup>7</sup> Gladman DD. Clinical Features and Diagnostic Considerations in Psoriatic Arthritis. *Rheum Dis Clin North Am.* 2015;41(4):569-79.

<sup>8</sup> Eder L, Law T, Chandran V, et al. Association between environmental factors and onset of psoriatic arthritis in patients with psoriasis. *Arthritis Care Res (Hoboken).* 2011;63(8):1091-7.

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## FACTS ABOUT PSORIATIC ARTHRITIS

- Psoriatic arthritis is a chronic inflammatory arthritis, which is characterized by pain, swelling, and stiffness in joints.<sup>1</sup> If left untreated, psoriatic arthritis can cause permanent joint and tissue damage resulting in impaired physical function and a reduced quality of life.<sup>6</sup>

- Psoriatic arthritis is associated with psoriasis, which appears as raised, red patches of skin covered with a silvery, white build-up of dead skin cells that are often painful or itchy.<sup>1</sup>
- Most people living with psoriatic arthritis will experience changes in their nails. Typically, they develop pitted nails, or may have separation of the nail from the nail bed.<sup>7</sup>

- While there is no confirmed cause of psoriatic arthritis, genetics, environment (such as exposure to certain infections or physical injury to the joints) and differences between individuals' immune systems are risk factors in developing the disease.<sup>8</sup>

Find patient group support and information about psoriatic arthritis

Arthritis Consumer Experts  
jointhealth.org

Arthritis Society  
arthritis.ca

Canadian Arthritis Patient Alliance  
arthritispatient.ca

Canadian Association of Psoriasis Patients  
canadianpsoriasis.ca

Canadian Psoriasis Network  
canadianpsoriasisnetwork.com

Canadian Spondylitis Association  
spondylitis.ca