

# Treating psoriasis the TCM way

Theme of this year's World Psoriasis Day is to treat the skin condition seriously

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Psoriasis can be a difficult and painful condition.

People who suffer from psoriasis not only itch, their skin may sting or burn.

Some even say it feels like they are "getting bitten by fire ants", according to traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) physician Tony Tang, the founder of Tangs Clinical Centre TCM, a phytopharmaceutical research centre that uses an exclusive range of herbal products to treat psoriasis and eczema.

An incurable, non-contagious chronic inflammatory skin disease, psoriasis can first appear at any age, but most commonly does before 35.

It can also affect the eyelids, ears, fingernails, toenails and soft tissues of the genitals.

Associated health conditions include high blood pressure, high cholesterol and diabetes. Additionally, about 40 per cent of sufferers experience joint inflammation known as psori-



(Left) A psoriasis patient's arm. (Above) TCM physician Tony Tang. PHOTOS: COURTESY OF TONY TANG

atic arthritis.

Today is World Psoriasis Day, and this year's theme is Treat Psoriasis Seriously.

The International Federation of Psoriasis Associations and its members in 56 countries are organising awareness-raising and advocacy campaigns to improve access to treatment, increase understanding and build unity among the psoriasis community.

Dr Tang, 47, stressed that it is important for sufferers to meet each other and exchange views and encouragement.

He told The New Paper: "Having psoriasis can take its toll on relationships, but being too conscious and worrying about the symptoms, even withdrawing themselves from society, can induce stress due to feeling isolated and will worsen the symp-

toms. Accepting the challenge of living with a disease will take courage and a positive outlook. Understanding that you are not alone is an important part of accepting your challenge."

**SPREAD TO ENTIRE BODY**

One of Dr Tang's patients, a 60-year-old taxi driver who wanted to be known only as Mr Low, has had psoriasis for 29 years.

He told TNP: "It started with a small dot on my head, which then spread to my entire body. That was when I knew it was something serious. I kept asking myself, 'Why me?'"

He felt like giving up and not going to work anymore.

The worst afflicted part of his body was his legs, which would often emit a foul smell.

His passengers would some-

times comment on how uncomfortable the odour made them feel. Mr Low said: "I would just keep quiet and roll down the windows."

In the beginning, he felt insecure and would cover up with long sleeves and long pants. But having lived with psoriasis for half his life, he has become used to it.

According to Dr Tang, around 20 per cent of patients with severe psoriasis are more likely to experience depression, anxiety and suicidal thoughts.

He said: "Psoriasis is associated with a significant psychiatric morbidity. Through my observation, (this group) had depressive symptoms as they were in a dilemma between psoriasis clearance and potent side effect of systemic treatment."

Mr Low had sought treatment

from the National Skin Centre for 10 years. He was prescribed moisturisers and oral tablets, but saw no improvement.

About 14 months ago, he decided to switch to Tangs Clinical Centre TCM.

He was given a topical cream and two types of oral powder and pays almost \$500 a month.

Mr Low said: "Even though it is more expensive (than the National Skin Centre), I can see more results."

The pain has been reduced and the redness and scales on his skin are also gradually looking better.

Instead of the conventional immunosuppressive treatment, which may cause kidney and liver toxicity to develop, Dr Tang's clinic uses herbal ingredients to deal with psoriasis.

"Herbal ingredients are specially formulated to help the immune system maintain a normal healthy balanced stage in a natural and safe way," he said.

"There is no cure for psoriasis, but it can be managed successfully. It is possible that psoriasis symptoms could simply disappear with effective treatment or maintain tolerable minimised lesion without further treatment at all."

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Public Symposium on "Giving Matters"

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