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| Host department: Nottingham |
| Project Title: |
| Exploring the treatment pathway for severe acne from patient and professional perspectives. |
| Proposed supervisory team: |
| + Dr Paul Leighton, Associate Professor of Applied Health Research, Centre of Evidence Based Dermatology, University of Nottingham.  + Dr Esther Burden-Teh, Clinical Associate Professor & Consultant Dermatologist, Centre of Evidence Based Dermatology, University of Nottingham. |
| Potential for cross consortium networking and educational opportunities: |
| This PhD will be closely linked to the Acne-ID trial (<https://www.acne-id.ac.uk/>) which is co-led by Esther and includes collaborators from the Univ of Southampton NSPCR - Miriam Santer (Prof of Primary Care Research) and Prof Eugene Healy (Prof of Dermatology).  The studentship will complement other acne focused research which spans Nottingham and Southampton – the SAFA trial of spironolactone (<https://www.bmj.com/content/381/bmj-2022-074349>) and Acne-Care Online (<https://www.southampton.ac.uk/primarycare/acnecareonline.page>). A focus upon the acne patient pathway may prompt further research focused upon operationalising the findings of these trials plus Acne-ID. |
| Project description: |
| Background:  Acne affects most people at some point during their lifetime, and over 80% of adolescents will have acne. It is often considered a short-term condition; however, this underestimates the emotional and physical experience of having acne and the risk of scarring associated with severe acne.  Management of acne spans topical treatments, oral antibiotics, to drugs such as isotretinoin which requires specialist prescribing. Uncertainties about managing topical treatments and concerns about antibiotic use and treatment side-effects can create challenges for both patients and healthcare providers. This is especially the case in severe acne where the use of isotretinoin has sparked public concern about mental health side-effects.  Aims and Objectives:  To generate detailed, person-centred understanding of the experience of the patient pathway and treatment for severe acne.  - to review existing evidence about the treatment of severe acne.  - to investigate healthcare professionals’ views on the treatment of severe acne.  - to investigate the experience of progressing along the severe acne treatment pathway.  - to investigate being prescribed isotretinoin for the first time.  Project Plan:  This studentship will utilise exploratory qualitative research methods to generate detailed insight about the experience of severe acne and its treatment.   1. Scoping review of existing materials.   the review will seek prior, published literature focused upon the experience of those that have been diagnosed with severe acne (Population). It will seek evidence which presents their views and experiences of both acne and its treatment (Concept), and it will focus upon both primary and secondary care settings (Context).   1. Healthcare professional perspectives.   The views and experiences of healthcare professionals about the management of severe acne will be explored in qualitative interviews. These interviews will focus upon the challenges that healthcare professionals find in managing severe acne and upon the support that they offer to their patients. A focus upon the transition of patients from primary to secondary care will be an important focus.   1. Patient perspectives.   Individuals with a diagnosis of severe acne will be recruited from secondary care to explore their experience of acne. Interviews will consider the impact of severe acne, their knowledge of treatment options and their experience of the patient pathway. A specific focus upon isotretinoin (and popular concerns about potential side-effects) will be evident in this.   1. Generating patient facing information resources.   To support synthesis of the findings from 1, 2 & 3 a series of stakeholder workshops will conclude this studentship. In these workshop participants (healthcare professionals, people living with acne, parents of young people with acne) will guide the production of patient facing information resources which describes the patient pathway and treatment options.  Impact:  At least 30,000 patients a year in the UK are treated for severe acne in secondary care. Each of these have worked through a stepwise pathway of of treatments whilst experience potentially distressing symptoms. The insight generated here will support these individuals with resources that help to understand the pathway that they are on and will support them in clinical conversations and shared decision-making. |
| Indicative project costs: |
| In addition to fees and stipend.  An annual budget of £5,000/year for professional development – e.g external course, conferences and other travel.  The purchase of a laptop and digital recorder is required to undertake the research = £1,500.  Research costs will include: thank-you vouchers for interview participants (50x£75=£3750); transcriptions costs (50x60minx£1.40per min=£4,200); venue hire for workshops (£2,500); costs associated with workshops (£2,500) |
| Training and development provision by host: |
| *Formal training:*  A programme of formal training is available to Postgraduate research students at the University of Nottingham**.** Training will focus on research skills and career development and will be tailored to the individual’s needs.  Additionally, students will be able to access a local Research Skills Programme. |
| *Informal training:*  The supervisory team will act as a support network providing mentoring on all aspects of the research. There will also be the opportunity to be involved in School of Medicine peer support groups. There will also be an opportunity to shadow the Acne-ID trial management systems and processes, and to be allocated a mentor from the Acne-ID team (this could be clinical and/or methodological). |
| *PPIE*:  The Centre of Evidence Based Dermatology (CEBD) holds an annual patient panel training workshop to provide networking opportunities, and shared learning for patients involved in dermatological research. The CEBD strives to meet the National Standards for Public Involvement developed by the NIHR and have recently reviewed procedures in the light of updated guidance |