



BENCHSIDE DISPATCHES

PSORIASIS AND INFLAMMATION

AN INTERVIEW WITH JASHIN WU, MD

Welcome to the next installment of *Benchside Dispatches*, a series of interviews with top researchers in the field of dermatology intended to highlight important advances in the care of medical skin disorders. Over the course of this series, prominent thought leaders will explore the latest research in specific dermatologic disease states.

In this installment, Jashin Wu, MD, discusses the latest findings in psoriasis. The following is excerpted from a video interview with Dr. Wu. You can watch the full interview at DermTube.com.

As a young researcher what do you think are some of the biggest challenges facing emerging scientists in dermatology?

Jashin Wu, MD: I think young dermatologists have many challenges when they start their research career. I think foremost the challenge is funding. As you can imagine, there's less and less funding for research. The NIH has less funding, so it's very important for dermatologists to be involved in the Dermatology Foundation. Dermatologists give donations to the Dermatology Foundation, and then the Dermatology Foundation gives seed grants to young researchers. With that they're able to get some preliminary data and are able to publish, and then with that they may be able to get an NIH grant.

Young dermatologists can also go through other venues such as American Skin Association, they have particular grants for specific diseases like vitiligo, alopecia, psoriasis. The National Psoriasis Foundation also has seed grants for young investigators. These are very good options for young investigators to get their funding going.

What attracted you to psoriasis research and how were you able to get involved in this field?

Dr. Wu: What first attracted me to psoriasis research was doing clinical trials for psoriasis patients. I felt that psoriasis patients were very appreciative for whatever you could do for them. This was during the time when the new biologics were coming onto the market. These medicines were game-changers for patients, and they were very grateful for what we could do for them. When I was a resident I wanted to go to a place where I could look at large databases to look at psoriasis.

When I was a resident Dr. Joel Gelfand had a very famous paper published in *JAMA* where he was able to show that

patients with psoriasis were more likely to have a risk for heart attacks, as well. If they had severe psoriasis, they were much more likely to have a heart attack compared to those with mild psoriasis. His analysis looked at the UK database. At the time they did not have biologics. Biologics were really not used that often in the UK system at the time. I wanted to go to a place where we had biologics in the system so I could look at whether biologics may alter this effect on heart attacks. That's why I went to the Kaiser system.

What is the holy grail in psoriasis research right now?

Dr. Wu: I would say the holy grail in research right now for psoriasis would be Dr. Gelfand's VIP studies. These are the so called vascular inflammation in psoriasis trials. Basically the main one he's going to look at is the effect of adalimumab, versus photo-therapy, versus placebo on biomarkers and also on vascular inflammation. This is a prospective study. They've enrolled about a hundred patients. I believe that they're fully enrolled and they may be completing the study soon, but basically the theory is that if their psoriasis is controlled with adalimumab, that should reduce the vascular inflammation. The photo-therapy may control the psoriasis, but may not necessarily control the vascular inflammation. They'll see whether systemic therapy is needed to control vascular inflammation which may help improve heart attack risk.

Complete the sentence, "The future of dermatologic research depends on..."

Dr. Wu: The future of dermatologic research depends on funding and also interest from young investigators. My main worry is that we may have funding for research, but a lot of investigators who are young may want to go more into private practice, or they may want to look more into cosmetic dermatology and not necessarily the medical dermatology that I love. I think it's very important that young investigators are exposed to medical dermatology, and that they have an interest in that, and that they are able to get funding if they have really good ideas. ■

Watch the full interview with Dr. Wu now: Dermtube.com/series/benchside-dispatches

