

## **ResearchOne Data Service, 2015/16 – YHAHSN-Funded Projects**

### **Lay abstract**

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### **Providing the foundation for effective decision support for skin / dermatological problems in primary care: exploring case mix, consultation and referral patterns, scope for service improvement, and decision support needs in SystemOne**

High quality dermatology (skin) care relies on effective diagnosis, management and referral in primary care.<sup>1</sup> General Practitioners will undertake 630 skin disease (dermatology) based consultations per year. The UK's 16,000 practice nurses (50% of the primary care workforce) will see between 1 and 5 patients with skin problems per week; with around a fifth seeing 6 or more. Some 4,000 deaths a year in the UK are due to skin disease.<sup>3</sup> Evidence suggests that there are significant variations in practice, with referral rates varying between 10 and 22 per 1000 population. With developments in electronic health records (EHRs) and the growth in the research evidence for dermatological care there is considerable potential to develop computerised clinical decision support (CDSS) for primary care management of skin disease.

The effectiveness of CDSS and its successful implementation depends on a good quality research evidence base and an EHR system. But, it also depends on our knowledge of the prevalence and severity of skin problems in the population and the context in which health care knowledge must be used by GPs and nurses. Whilst nurses and GPs both see patients with skin problems, almost nothing is known about the prevalence (how widespread) and severity of the sorts of skin conditions they are confronted with in practice. This project, using ResearchOne records, will therefore explore:

- whether GPs and primary care nurses see “different” sorts of patients with skin problems
- if nurses or doctors take longer and assess these patients differently in their consultations)
- if there are any differences in the extent to which they follow national guidelines on skin care between GPs and nurses
- how accurate they are in making a diagnoses and appropriately referring patients with chronic inflammatory skin disease

The project will provide a foundation for the development, implementation and evaluation of different decision support approaches that are tailored to the - potentially very different - populations of people with skin disease and their primary care nurses and doctors.

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<sup>1</sup> Schofield J, Grindlay D and Williams H (2009) Skin Conditions in the UK: a Health Care Needs Assessment. Centre of Evidence Based Dermatology, University of Nottingham.