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Implementation of the PsoWell™ Model for the Management of People with Complex Psoriasis

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Abstract

Background: The Psoriasis and Well-being (PsoWell)[™] training programme incorporating Motivational Interviewing improves clinicians' knowledge and skills to manage complex psoriasis including behaviour change. **Objectives:** To deliver the PsoWell[™] training programme to dermatology specialists and evaluate the acceptability and feasibility of implementing the PsoWell[™] model across dermatology services. **Methods:** Framework Analysis of 19 qualitative semi-structured interviews following delivery of nine, one-day PsoWell[™] training days involving 119 participants. **Results:** Two themes: *Perceptions and Priorities* and *Awareness*, which sub-divided into: *Awareness Not Competence* and *Increasing Awareness*. **Conclusions:** The PsoWell[™] model is acceptable and feasible to implement across dermatology settings. Participants were more skilled and motivated to address psychological issues including behaviour change but wanted further training to ensure competency. They claimed scepticism among some colleagues regarding whole-patient management might prevent uptake. Data showing impact on health outcomes are needed and might overcome scepticism. Remote consultation could embrace the PsoWell[™] approach.

Key words: Psoriasis, psychodermatology, medical education, qualitative research

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Introduction

Psoriasis is a complex, long-term inflammatory skin condition affecting 2-3% of the UK population¹. Comorbidities are common² and the increased risk of cardiovascular disease (CVD) for some is associated with obesity, physical inactivity, excess alcohol consumption and smoking³. Changing these health risk behaviours³ underpinning these comorbidities² could offset increased CVD risk.

Most clinicians recognise the role of health behaviours in managing psoriasis, but may lack the knowledge, skills⁴ or confidence to support behaviour change (BC)⁵. Psoriasis management has largely focused on physical symptoms⁶. The aim of BC training for professionals is to enhance communication skills⁴, increase motivation and confidence to address this wider impact of psoriasis⁵. The Capability, Motivation and Opportunity (COM-B) model identifies these three essential components in BC⁷.

The fidelity of complex interventions should be rigorously tested not simply assumed⁸. Some psychological interventions appear to be effective in psoriasis⁹ but few have been subject to large-scale trials. Educational and self-management training interventions typically assess patient outcomes only⁹ and few are specific to dermatology specialists. Generic studies show increased shared decision-making and discussion and assessment of CVD risk factors, but generally do not address psychological illness and behaviours¹⁰. Another showed increased dermatologist satisfaction with care provision, discussion around well-being and recognition of health-related quality of life¹¹. Specific training is required to address psychological aspects of psoriasis, support patient-centeredness and upskill clinicians in BC to reduce psoriasis flares and CVD risk.

Motivational Interviewing (MI) is a collaborative consultation style used to increase internal motivation and capability to develop goals and action plans for BC¹². This approach can bolster self-confidence in healthcare staff and facilitate effective self-management¹³ of long-term conditions¹⁴ including psoriasis⁹.

MI training interventions can enhance patient understanding of psoriasis without inducing anxiety and facilitate a whole-person approach¹⁵. PsoWell™ (psoriasis and well-being), an MI-based training programme and clinical initiative that advocates a holistic, *multi-disciplinary* approach to managing people with complex psoriasis, improved primary and secondary care clinicians' psoriasis-related knowledge and consultation skills¹⁶. PsoWell™ was deemed acceptable and feasible in a specialised setting¹⁶. Thus, MI-based interventions benefit patients and enable clinicians to provide psychological support.

The PsoWell™ approach was developed in a specialist dermatology centre; the feasibility of incorporating MI in dermatology services with less resource is not yet established. We aimed to deliver an effective PsoWell™ training programme in dermatology centres across the UK and determine whether participants considered this training and clinical initiative feasible and acceptable to implement within local dermatology services.

Method

Design

A cross-sectional, qualitative study involving semi-structured interviews (SSI) via telephone.

Participants in the training programme

Dermatology consultants, specialist nurses and registrars, as well as health and clinical psychologists participated in training.

Recruitment

Training Programme. Snowball sampling using research team contacts within dermatology, psychodermatology and psychology departments of the National Health Service (NHS) trusts and boards and academic organisations assisted with recruitment. Flyers containing study information, participant information sheets, and Uniform Resource Locator (URL) for the registering interest and training application forms (appendices A-D) were distributed to contacts.

We aimed to recruit at least one doctor and one nurse from a centre and focused geographically where demand for training was highest.

Training places were funded by the Psoriasis Association UK and were limited to 20 per group to enable individual skills coaching and maintain training quality.

Evaluation. Post-training, participants were invited via email to participate in a SSI via telephone. There was no strict recruitment criteria, though purposive sampling was employed to ensure the sample included at least two participants from each training session and represent a wide range of clinical roles from different dermatology services across the UK.

Training Intervention

Aim: A 1-day MI training programme¹⁶ aimed to improve clinicians' knowledge and skills for BC and enable them to integrate MI techniques with routine dermatology consultations.

Format: Lectures and interactive sessions plus individual coaching were delivered by experienced MI practitioner-trainers. See appendix E for the training agenda including the content, type and length of sessions.

Materials

Workbook. The training workbook¹⁶ contained support materials for participants. A certificate for individual participants and a clinic certificate for dermatology teams were awarded on completion of training.

Interview schedule. Questions (appendix F) focused on the acceptability of the PsoWell™ model in clinical practice; the feasibility of upscaling and implementing the model in dermatology settings; and its usefulness in achieving a patient-centred consultation for BC.

Procedure

Ethical approval was obtained from the Cardiff University Research Ethics Committee.

Training Programme. Sessions were organised across nine UK regions in conference and academic centres from October 2019 - February 2020. Participants provided written informed consent and populated a demographic questionnaire (appendix G) to enable selection for the evaluation interview.

Semi-structured Interviews. Encrypted audio-recorded interviews lasting 48-80 minutes were professionally transcribed verbatim.

Analysis

Semi-structured Interviews. The Information Power Model¹⁷ was used to determine the sample size. Data collection stopped when adequate information power was achieved: the comprehensive aims and cross-case analysis were balanced by the evidence, theory-based interventions and analysis; purposive selection from the target population; and high-quality dialogue generated from the interview schedule.

Framework Analysis was conducted from an essentialist/realist epistemological standpoint describing the “experiences, meanings and reality of participants”¹⁸. This method facilitated a systematic and transparent analysis of interview data¹⁹.

Transcripts were deductively coded against constructs of the Theoretical Framework of Acceptability (TFA) to determine the retrospective (experienced) and prospective (perceived) acceptability²⁰ of the PsoWell™ approach. Relevant text that did not fit the TFA was coded inductively.

Two authors independently coded one transcript before meeting with the research team to check the consistency of coding, resolve discrepancies, and revise the framework accordingly. This process was repeated until agreement was reached. The first author applied the framework (Table 1) to the remaining transcripts and the second author routinely sampled excerpts to ensure consistency. The transcripts were coded in NVivo. Surface-level themes were identified, refined and defined.

Table 1. *Theoretic Framework of Acceptability (TFA)*

Code Name	Description
Affective Attitude	"How an individual feels about the intervention." How trainees feel about the training programme or implementing the integrated clinic structure or consultation style. Consider positive and negative emotions.
<i>Positive</i>	Positive feelings towards the training programme or clinical approach*
<i>Negative</i>	Negative feelings towards the training programme or clinical approach
Burden	"The perceived amount of effort that is required to participate in the intervention." Consider the physical and mental effort required to participate in the training programme, consultation style and clinic structure.
<i>Physical effort</i>	Behaviours such as applying to attend; travelling to/from training; completing the training programme including specific training activities; or practicing/applying new skills in clinical practice.
<i>Mental effort</i>	Examples include learning the principles and skills of Motivational Interviewing.
Ethicality	"The extent to which the intervention has a good fit with an individual's value system." Does the training programme/clinical approach align with the trainees' values and morals or not? Consider whether the trainees consider PsoWell™ a meaningful intervention.
Intervention Coherence	"The extent to which the participant understands the intervention and how it works."

* *Clinical approach* is a term used to describe the PsoWell consultation style and integrated clinic structure

Consider whether trainees think of Motivational Interviewing as a consultation style incorporating key principles and skills, including goal setting and action planning, for (lifestyle) behaviour change.

Consider how trainees conceptualise the PsoWell™ approach; do they acknowledge it as integrated, multi-disciplinary and person-centred model of patient care?

Opportunity Costs

"The extent to which benefits, profits or values must be given up to engage in the intervention."

Possible examples: taking annual leave, study days or cancelling clinics in order to attend training; loss of clinician autonomy due to shared decision-making; loss of control.

Perceived Effectiveness

"The extent to which the intervention is perceived to be likely to achieve its purpose."

Consider if trainees think the training programme will improve clinicians' knowledge, skills and confidence to address lifestyle within a dermatology consultation.

Consider whether trainees believe the PsoWell™ approach (consultation style and clinic set-up) will improve the management of complex psoriasis.

Self-Efficacy

"The participant's confidence that they can perform the behaviour(s) required to participate in the intervention."

For example: role-play training activities; using specific Motivational Interviewing skills; addressing lifestyle factors within consultations.

Open Codes[†]

[†] Additional codes were added to the analytical framework to represent relevant text that did not fit the TFA and thus were coded inductively.

Code Name	Description
Reason for attending training	Personal motivations and explanations for taking part in the training intervention.
Facilitators	Physical and psychological factors that enable participants to engage with the training and clinic interventions.
<i>Training programme</i>	Factors that could facilitate attendance, completion or enjoyment of the training intervention.
<i>Clinic</i>	Factors that could support the implementation of the clinic approach.
Barriers	Physical and psychological factors that could negatively impact participant engagement with the training and clinic interventions.
<i>Training programme</i>	Factors that were perceived to deter participants from attending or completing the training intervention.
<i>Clinic</i>	Factors that could hinder the implementation of the clinic approach in dermatology settings.
Suggestions	Ideas for improving the PsoWell™ training or clinic intervention.
<i>Training programme</i>	Suggestions for improving the training intervention.
<i>Clinic</i>	Ideas for improving the process of implementation of the PsoWell™ clinic approach in dermatology settings.

Results

Of the 156 people who applied, 119 (76%) completed the programme in nine locations. See Table 2 for participant demographics. Nineteen participants (three males and 16 females) were purposively selected for interview comprising six dermatology consultants, five specialist nurses (two with academic posts), three psychologists and one each of the following: dermatology registrar, GP with specialist interest in dermatology, advanced care practitioner and dermatology research fellow.

Two themes were identified: 1) *Perceptions and Priorities* and 2) *Awareness*, further divided into: *Awareness Not Competence* and *Increasing Awareness*.

Perceptions and Priorities

Clinicians reported that medical school had not prepared them to manage complex psoriasis and that addressing BC, especially for weight management, was challenging. All attended to improve their skills to ensure they were “*giving the patient the best consultation*” (Specialist Nurse):

“really seeing it as a priority, and not seeing it as an optional thing but thinking right this is as important as talking about side effects of medication” (Consultant Dermatologist).

Although no formal training barriers were identified, time away from clinic was the “*main restriction*” (Dermatology Registrar) with distance to travel to the training programme another. One participant observed that traditional models of psoriasis management and clinical job roles do not acknowledge psychological and behavioural factors and thus are a potential barrier:

“there are barriers in terms of feeling that this sort of work is for counsellors and psychologists as opposed to... the more usual found jobs in a dermatology department... and therefore struggling to make time for it erm because of a belief that it's not, it's not part of their role” (Clinical Psychologist).

However, one participant felt barriers were not insurmountable: “*I think if people had really wanted to come they'd have just got round it*” (Specialist Nurse & Lecturer). Clinicians noted the benefit of the PsoWell™ approach and supported implementation:

“PsoWell and motivational interviewing is really something that should be incorporated into all consultations” (Consultant Nurse).

“As well as job satisfaction I think that it is likely to lead to better outcomes for patients... it's likely to be more cost effective for the department but also, for erm, for the trust as a whole” (Clinical Psychologist).

Negative perceptions of mental health provision, long waiting lists and individual motivation were perceived barriers to patients attending appointments. Conversely, the PsoWell™ integrated interdisciplinary approach to care may be acceptable to patients who report that they “*want more of it*” (Counselling Psychologist).

Clinicians working in interdisciplinary teams highlighted the value of co-treating patients:

“each practitioner can bring an expertise that would be usually absent... we've shown in psycho-dermatology clinics that to have that multi-disciplinary approach is clinically beneficial for the patient but also more cost-effective for er commissioners”. (Consultant Dermatologist)

Table 2. Demographic information of participants who attended the PsoWell™ training programme.

Training location	Trainees (n)	Gender of trainees (n)		Age		Country of training		Job title (n)	Years in specialism		Size* of Dermatology Service (n)				
		Male	Female	M	(SD)	UK	Other		M	(SD)	Small	Medium	Large	Other [†]	
Wales	11	0	11	33	9.54	7	4	Dermatology registrar	4	2.81	2.36	1	3	5	2
								Clinical researcher	2						
								Dermatology nurse	2						
								Deputy sister	1						
								Psychology researcher	1						
								Trainee psychologist	1						
North Yorkshire	14	2	12	43	9.48	13	1	Consultant	4	10.08	6.29	1	10	1	2
								Dermatology nurse	4						
								General practitioner	3						
								Clinical researcher	2						
								Administrator	1						
Derbyshire	13	0	13	42	9.93	11	2	Consultant	4	11.62	10.10	0	10	2	1
								Dermatology nurse	8						
								Dermatology Registrar	1						
North West England	12	1	11	38	13.06	10	2	Consultant	1	6.42	5.88	1	0	8	3
								Specialist Doctor	2						
								Dermatology Nurse	1						
								Dermatology Registrar	1						
								Clinical Researcher	2						
								General Practitioner	1						
								Psychiatrist	1						
								Health Psychologist	1						
								Trainee Psychologist	2						
Northern Ireland	11	2	9	44	10.11	11	0	Consultant	2	11.27	11.11	1	8	2	0
								Dermatology Nurse	5						
								Dermatology Registrar	1						
								General Practitioner	1						
								Pharmacist	2						

South East England	19	3	16	43	10.16	17	2	Consultant	5	11.53	8.62	1	2	16	0
								Dermatology Nurse	9						
								Dermatology Registrar	2						
								Administrator	1						
								Clinical Psychologist	2						
South East England (session 1)	12	1	11	41	8.53	10	2	Consultant	2	7.92	8.01	0	2	10	0
								Dermatology Nurse	4						
								Dermatology Registrar	3						
								Clinical Researcher	1						
								Clinical Psychologist	1						
								Pharmacist	1						
South West England (session 2)	15	1	14	38	10.91	14	1	Consultant	3	10.36	9.90	2	0	4	9
								Dermatology Nurse	4						
								Dermatology Registrar	1						
								Trainee Psychologist	1						
								Clinical Researcher	1						
								Psychology Researcher	4						
								Physiotherapist	1						
Scotland	12	1	11	50	11.48	12	0	Dermatology Nurse	10	10.91	8.25	0	0	9	1
								Associate Specialist	1						
								Health Psychologist	1						
Total	119														

* No predetermined criteria for determining size were employed other than whether it was located in a teaching hospital of district General Hospital. Participants were asked to self-identify their situation for the service and the recruitment champions advised on suitability of participation.

† Other type of organisation, institution or place of work, e.g. in the community or academia

Furthermore, there was a clear need and desire for dedicated psychological support in dermatology:

“It’s something that we definitely need that we don’t know we need... both from a clinical team perspective, but also from a patient perspective” (Consultant Dermatologist).

A lack of mental health services and inequities in psychology provision were identified as “broader” (Consultant Dermatologist) problems within the NHS. Barriers to employing psychologists included insufficient funding and clinic space. Some believed that MI was time consuming to implement within standard consultations, yet this was not always the reality in clinical practice:

“I thought it [MI] would end up making the consultation longer but it actually makes it shorter” (Consultant Dermatologist).

Similarly, the cost of employing psychologists was raised:

“I’m not sure why they [doctors] think it’s expensive... they don’t compare it against, what actually they can save, the sort of benefit it might have in terms of use of medication... they don’t do all the health economics, that Psychology might involve... it’s a little bit more complicated, than actually saying, it’s just a salary” (Counselling Psychologist).

Individual perceptions of job roles and time restraints may negatively affect willingness to complete PsoWell™ training. Implementation of this inter-disciplinary clinic approach to patient care will depend on service leaders’ perceptions of its value.

Awareness

Awareness Not Competence. The training included experiential and vicarious learning with feedback through role-play activities, which, despite being something that people found challenging, was considered fundamental for MI skills:

“I actually got quite a lot out the role play, even though we all hate it was quite interesting to watch and learn from” (Advanced Care Practitioner).

Working alongside clinicians and academics with similar “ideologies” (Consultant Dermatologist) provided a valuable learning opportunity to discuss experiences and “disintegrate any sense of erm hierarchy” (Consultant Dermatologist). Following training, clinicians felt more confident to support BC:

“It gave me the confidence in knowing how to erm ... open up those conversations on behavioural change, which maybe I found more difficult to do beforehand (Specialist Nurse).

Clinicians did not claim MI expertise: “I don’t feel skilled particularly in MI” (Specialist Nurse & Lecturer) but seeing skills demonstrated encouraged them to be more mindful of their clinical practice:

“it was an extremely beneficial day that erm, made me aware of different ways of conducting a consultation that I wouldn’t have known about before and techniques that I will put into clinical practice, that I think will improve the overall management of my patients” (Consultant Dermatologist).

MI techniques were viewed as “the sort of things that you sort of need to practice and sort of develop over time” (Consultant Dermatologist). The training materials were considered a useful prompt for continued MI practice but practical follow-up sessions were requested to increase confidence in supporting health BC.

Increasing Awareness. Increased psychology provision within dermatology services was desirable but most recognised the need to demonstrate improved patient outcomes to convince budget holders to prioritise and invest in psychologists:

“The ones who make the decisions... they have a finite pot and I think we just need to kind of raise, I don’t know, raise the profile or show more the benefits of, of having a psychologist in a service, in a way which is understood by budget holders, or service commissioners” (Specialist Nurse).

Increasing awareness of the benefits of this approach at the service and policy level is necessary to ensure implementation of the PsoWell™ model.

Discussion

Participants felt better prepared to address BC with relevant patients but required further training to ensure competence. Outdated or inaccurate beliefs of colleagues, commissioners or service managers might prevent increased specialist psychological support from becoming a funding priority

What the present study adds

We replicated and extended the original PsoWell™ training programme findings¹⁶ in a wider sample of clinicians from primary, secondary, community and non-specialist settings. Participants reported being more knowledgeable, skilled and confident to address BC for the management of psoriasis and CVD risk and reported their clinical practice and research is aligned with the PsoWell™ approach. This was expressed most clearly among clinicians from multi-disciplinary teams including psychologists. As well as increasing capability, training renewed clinicians' motivation and enthusiasm to provide holistic patient care through interdisciplinary working, and helped them to create opportunities during their routine consultations.

'Personal models' (beliefs) of psoriasis influence clinicians' approaches to patient care²¹. The present sample indicated that dermatology staff who did not believe they should address well-being or BC were unlikely to attend training, reinforcing the key role of beliefs about psoriasis in delivering whole-person care.

Implications for practice

There is a gap in the medical curriculum relating to the wider impact of psoriasis on other conditions including the role of health behaviours as risk factors for those conditions. The importance of communication skills training for medical practitioners is now widely recognised²². The inclusion of MI to address psychological issues and BC across long-term conditions would be beneficial.

PsoWell™ is an acceptable framework for the holistic management of psoriasis and potentially, other dermatological and long-term conditions. This study reinforces the desire in dermatology clinicians for dedicated psychological support provided by psychologists *as well as* not *instead of* the PsoWell™ approach, but this information should be communicated to service commissioners. Resourcing this initiative may be challenging due to the impact of Covid-19, although the subsequent shift towards remote service delivery presents a valuable opportunity to deliver MI in a cost-effective manner.

Implications for future research

We have demonstrated that brief intervention to address BC is acceptable to dermatology clinicians. We now need to determine if the PsoWell™ approach improves patient outcomes compared to standard treatment in psoriasis.

In 2018, the top priority of the James Lind Alliance Psoriasis Priority Setting Partnership was support for health-related behaviour change in managing psoriasis. Testing psychological interventions for patients was also in the top five priorities²³. Those with psoriasis and increased risk of CVD because of obesity and inactivity constitute a vulnerable group at greater risk of contracting Covid-19²⁴, making this programme of work a priority.

Strengths & Limitations

We used an established BC theoretical framework to make this intervention reproducible. The training programme was tailored rather than generic and was delivered by experts in MI with experience in working with people with psoriasis, therefore, ensuring quality.

Self-selection of participants may limit this work as participants were motivated by the content and may not represent the wider dermatology community. The first author co-delivered the training sessions and conducted the interviews, thereby potentially introducing bias towards participants' positive training experiences. Finally, the lack of a real time evaluation of the use of MI skills is arguably a limitation; however, our previous work established an increase in clinicians' consultation skills using this approach¹⁶.

Conclusions

PsoWell™ training is a necessary and acceptable BC intervention. Participants claimed it increased capability, confidence and motivation to support health BC in patients. They believed they could implement this training as part of their whole-person management practice with adequate resourcing. The Covid-19 pandemic has changed the way dermatology services are delivered. NHS trusts should capitalise on these changes to provide cost-effective MI training for staff and increase dedicated psychological support in face-to-face and remote dermatology consultations.

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