

# PATIENT PERSPECTIVES ON TREATMENT EFFECTIVENESS IN PSORIATIC ARTHRITIS: UNDERSTANDING WHAT MATTERS MOST

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BACKGROUND/OBJECTIVES

Psoriatic arthritis (PsA) is a complex, chronic, heterogeneous disease affecting multiple domains

Recent treatment recommendations highlight the importance of shared decision-making in PsA<sup>1,2</sup>

This pilot study investigated patient perceptions of PsA medication effectiveness, patient treatment priorities, and how health care providers (HCPs) can best communicate treatment expectations and emphasize cumulative gains in progress to facilitate shared decision-making

METHODS

- Janssen's Patient Engagement Research Council (PERC) program represents diverse groups of disease-aware adults ≥18 years of age with chronic health conditions who live in the United States and provide insights and feedback during a specific, structured series of activities<sup>3</sup>
- PsA PERC patients:
  - Recruited from online advertising, patient organizations, referral by HCPs
  - Self-reported diagnosis of PsA and under the care of a rheumatologist
  - Selection based on demographic and self-reported clinical characteristics
  - Signed a consent and release form and were compensated for their time
- Focus group:
  - Multiple choice pre-focus group survey provided a starting point for discussions
  - Discussion guide-based, 2-hour, semi-structured virtual focus group (audio-recorded and transcribed) was held Feb 2022
    - Participants were probed for relative importance of aspects of treatment effectiveness to determine ranking of patient priorities
  - Coding applying thematic analysis was conducted by a qualitatively trained researcher

CONCLUSIONS

In this exploratory focus group study involving biologic-experienced patients with established PsA:

- Patients prioritized durable treatment response; prevention of joint damage; and improvement in impaired function, joint pain, and stiffness when determining PsA treatment effectiveness
  - Patient focus on durability may reflect previously reported concerns around future health uncertainty<sup>2</sup>
  - Alleviating fatigue and brain fog was also highly important
- Patients considered the Patient Global Assessment to most accurately reflect their PsA disease activity and response to treatment
- Patient priorities when assessing PsA medication effectiveness and communicating with HCPs can inform shared decision-making in clinical care
- Setting realistic expectations of improvements (timing/extent) in specific functional impairments important to the individual patient was considered the most effective way to communicate treatment benefit
- Future studies investigating improvements in specific activities included in outcome measures such as the Health Assessment Questionnaire-Disability Index will further facilitate tailored, meaningful discussions with PsA patients during shared decision-making

RESULTS

Among the 5 biologic-experienced patients with established PsA who participated in the PERC program, long-term effectiveness was more important than rapid onset of action; limiting joint damage and impact on daily functions were primary concerns when assessing treatment effectiveness, and mental/physical fatigue and brain fog were considered highly disruptive.

Patients provided specific feedback as to why they prioritized prevention of joint damage, long-term effectiveness, fatigue, and brain fog when assessing PsA medication effectiveness

Specific Patient Feedback on Greatest Concerns When Assessing Treatment Effectiveness

“Probably early on, [the most important factor] would’ve been the time to start seeing an effect...”

“Based on our history and our family, how well my medication works over the long term is probably the most important thing. Because my son and I have been on a lot of biologics, and it seems to be after a year, 18 months, it just stops working and we have to try another one.”

“Prevention of damage progression, now that stands alone”

“When I go and I see my dermatologist who is the one who is actually prescribing the medication, he asked me before even the skin. He’s like, ‘Well, how are your joints? Because once those are damaged, there’s not a whole lot you can do to fix that.’ So I think joints are more important than the skin.”

“I look at it as no new joint damage, no new joint pain. Obviously, the stuff that’s already broken can’t be fixed, but that nothing else is starting to give me problems.”

“Long-term treatment effectiveness was of higher priority than time to onset. The latter may be of greater concern to newly diagnosed patients

“All patients highlighted control of arthritis to prevent joint damage, and most also noted improvement of joint pain, stiffness, and function

“High level of concern about the potential functional impact of joint damage and eventual need for joint replacement

“Fatigue was among the “worst” aspects of PsA

“Brain fog was “embarrassing,” affected ability to work and socialize, and damaged self-esteem

“Improving joint pain and stiffness

“The fatigue and the brain fog and the joints, all three. They are my daily life... Those three things are the key to my living a decent, normal life.”

“It’s like your energy just shuts down for your body and you kind of almost feel literally hands shoving you here to collapse...”

“I just want to be able to function properly. Not even without pain, but be able to take a deep breath, be able to walk across the floor. To be able to pick up a pencil. That’s all I’m asking for.”

“They say, “Hey, am I getting better? Can I walk further?”... That’s basically how the patients judge efficacy.”

“Yesterday, I couldn’t find my words, and that kind of sticks with you. You start talking you start a sentence, and you lose that word, and you stop because my brain won’t let me go past that word. I’m mad at myself for forgetting...”

“The precise definition of “long term” varied.

Patient Global Assessment (PGA) was viewed as the most valuable tool to assess improvement of PsA symptoms, as it captures the aspects of PsA most meaningful to individual patients

Patient Insights About Tools to Assess PsA Disease Activity

Assessment tool	Patient insights
Patient Global Assessment	The PGA was considered the most important endpoint, but some patients may not be familiar with it
Tender Joint Count	TJC was believed to reflect extent of joint disease
Pain (VAS or NRS)	Early improvements in pain were perceived as positive, but the measure does not pinpoint specific areas of pain
Physician Global Assessment	Perceived as less useful; patients considered physicians less likely to understand their symptoms and may dismiss complaints

NRS=numerical rating scale; TJC=tender joint count; VAS=visual analog scale.

Discussing realistic timing and extent of improvements in specific activities that individual patients with PsA find difficult was the most effective way for HCPs to set treatment expectations

Proposed Personalized Strategies for Communication With Patients About Treatment Expectations for PsA

Focus on small cumulative steps to progress

Set realistic expectations

Discuss effectiveness in terms of real-life daily function and activities

Analogies that describe personalized treatment expectations as small steps toward progress and encourage patients to reflect on their individual cumulative gains were considered helpful

Proposed Ladder Analogy to Encourage Patients to Reflect on Cumulative Gains in Progress

“A ladder analogy would be a good way [to show] your feet are not on the ground anymore ... you don’t have to think about the top rung – only about the next rung. ... if you got on the first rung, isn’t it entirely possible that you can manage another one in time?”

“...get a cup of coffee...”

....floss and brush your teeth....

....walk to the bathroom....

20% difference means you’re going to be able to get out of bed...”

Right now, you can barely get out of bed

You’re going to be able to do more things than you can do right now. You’re going to be more functional

Patient Priorities When Assessing PsA Medication Effectiveness

Long-term treatment effectiveness

Prevention of joint damage and its sequelae

Improving joint pain and stiffness

Improving function

Fatigue

Brain fog

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