



Royal College of Physicians

Professor Hywel Williams Biography

Hywel trained in dermatology and epidemiology in London and joined the University of Nottingham in 1994. There, he built up the Centre of Evidence-Based Dermatology (CEBD) by founding the Cochrane Skin Group (which identifies key uncertainties in clinical dermatology), the UK Dermatology Clinical Trials Network (which addresses those uncertainties by means of national and independent pragmatic clinical trials) and the knowledge management hub which spins out findings to a community of users, with patients always at the centre. Hywel also provides direct clinical care as a consultant paediatric dermatologist at Queen's Medical Centre at Nottingham, specialising in the care of atopic eczema. He cares passionately about independent, clinically-relevant research and is an advocate of genuine patient involvement in the practice of evidence-based dermatology. He has published around 500 peer-reviewed articles, most of which relate to atopic eczema in children. He is widely cited for his work on the diagnostic criteria and risk factors for eczema, outcome measures for clinical trials, and for the many independent clinical trials and systematic reviews on the prevention and treatment of atopic eczema that he has led over the last 20 years. Hywel is a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians, a National Institute of Health Research Senior Investigator and a Fellow of the Academy of Medical Sciences. In January 2016, he became the new Director of the NIHR Health Technology Assessment Programme. He is slightly mad at times.

Presentation Summary

Topic: Epidemiology, evidence and eczema: putting patients at the centre of our research cycle

I am slightly allergic to “what’s new” talks. They typically cite new and expensive drugs which are not yet available. New may sound interesting, but new is not the same as good, and most things are not new. For me, what is new in eczema research is the revolution of evidence-based medicine, reducing research waste and putting patients at the centre of our research cycle. In other words, it is the integration of external evidence with the clinic and the establishment of a systematic framework of diagnostic criteria, core outcome measures and knowledge mobilisation that enables global collaboration and patient benefit. I will start my journey in the clinic and explain how research at our Centre of Evidence-Based Dermatology has systematically reviewed available evidence on the treatment of eczema and identified uncertainties that have been addressed through independent clinical trials. I will end up in the clinic by confessing how my practice has changed, and what physicians should and should not be doing now.