

## ADDENDUM

### 4<sup>th</sup> International Workshop for the Study of Itch

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#### **PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF ITCH: QUALITATIVE RESEARCH ON OLDER ADULTS LIVING WITH ATOPIC DERMATITIS SINCE CHILDHOOD (P30)**

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Psychological aspects of the itch-scratch cycle were identified in a qualitative study on the development of expertise in self-management of atopy. The purpose of this dissertation research was to identify the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed and the resources used in self-management of atopy. Six adults aged 45–60 with early-onset atopic dermatitis (AD), asthma, allergic rhinitis, and/or anaphylaxis participated in two semi-structured two-hour interviews, using grounded theory and narrative methodologies. Interviewed participants had severe or moderate AD and allergies, and mostly mild asthma. Previously gathered archival data from 225 eczema patients in an Internet listserv peer support group were used to triangulate the interview data. Participants were asked how they learned

to manage their conditions, starting in childhood when symptoms first occurred, through adulthood to their current age. Knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to manage itch were inter-related with the management of other symptoms of atopy. Psycho-physiological experiences of stress that contributed to the itch-scratch cycle and its level of severity included: anxiety, frustration, anger, hopelessness, conflicts between competing cognitive-behavioral demands, and pressure to take action in ambiguous circumstances. Habitual behavioral patterns and situationally-derived cues or triggers also increased the likelihood that psycho-physiological sensations would be interpreted as itch. Different knowledge, skills, and abilities were needed to cope with different types of perceived itch, e.g. scratching that triggers more intense itch vs. scratch that relieves itch, emotional triggers of itch, and itch induced by environmental conditions or contact with allergens. Findings suggest new directions for research.

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