Towards Personalised Medicine for Inflammatory Skin Diseases - Start of Research Project BIOMAP

Contributed by: BIOMAP c/o Eurice GmbH

On 1 April, 2019, the European research project BIOMAP (Biomarkers in Atopic Dermatitis and Psoriasis) kicks off its activities with the aim of improving the lives of patients affected by the two most common inflammatory skin conditions. Addressing key unmet needs in treating atopic dermatitis and psoriasis by analysing data from more than 50,000 patients, the five-year project will have a broad impact on disease understanding, patient care and future therapies.

The team comprises 26 academic and five industry partners as well as five patient organisations. The Innovative Medicines Initiative, the European Commission and the participating pharmaceutical companies provide EUR 20.8 million funding for the first IMI project in the field of dermatology.

Atopic dermatitis and psoriasis affect more than 300 million people worldwide and are highly variable in terms of onset, severity, progression over time and response to treatment. Resulting in significant morbidity and an increased risk for associated conditions such as arthritis and asthma, inflammatory skin diseases are a huge burden to patients and families, care-givers and healthcare systems. Yet, despite many years of research, there are still significant gaps in the understanding of both conditions.

The renowned clinicians and scientists of BIOMAP, who have now joined forces in a large public-private partnership, will examine the causes and mechanisms of these conditions. By analysing the largest collection of patient data ever and performing advanced molecular investigations at the single cell level and in the tissue context, they aim at identifying biomarkers for variations in disease outcome. Taking advantage of recent technical developments in translational medicine, the project will drive drug discovery and improve direct disease management by combining clinical, genetic and epidemiological expertise with modern molecular analysis techniques and newly-developed tools in bioinformatics. BIOMAP is the first IMI project in the field of dermatology.

Assuming that the variation in symptoms and disease progression reflects fundamental differences at a molecular level, the researchers will take a holistic, systematic approach to identify patient subgroups with different subtypes of disease and different responses to therapy. Additionally, the BIOMAP consortium aims to examine the genetic and environmental factors which exert additional influence on disease outcome and treatment response as well as measurable factors in the patients’ blood and skin which reveal the disease subtype they belong to. In an unprecedented analysis of harmonised clinical and molecular data from more than 50,000 patients as well as healthy individuals, the BIOMAP researchers aim to derive a new model for disease classification in order to provide each patient with optimal treatment and an individualised therapy scheme.

Professor Stephan Weidinger, academic coordinator of the consortium and internationally renowned clinician scientist from the University of Kiel Germany, hopes that “atopic dermatitis and psoriasis will be identified as a series of different diseases rather than just one disease, each with a characteristic molecular ‘signature’.”

Dr Paul Bryce, the consortium’s project lead from Sanofi, states that “by understanding these diseases as comprehensively as
possible, any molecularly defined endotypes we will find will help to drive the next generation of precision therapies that can improve the lives of patients.”

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The project will officially kick off its activities with a first meeting in London on 10-12 April, 2019.

Contributor

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<tr>
<th>Contact</th>
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