A Global Call for Awareness of Psoriasis as a Disability

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International Federation of Psoriasis Associations publishes issue brief on psoriasis and disability to raise awareness of the physical and social barriers people with psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis face in their daily lives.

(Stockholm, December 3, 2014)

Today, on the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, the International Federation of Psoriasis Associations, IFPA, launches an issue brief highlighting the physical and social barriers that people with psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis face, calling governments around the world to action.

Earlier this year, at the 67th World Health Assembly, the WHO member states recognized that psoriasis is not only a serious non-communicable disease, but that it also can be a disabling one. Yet, there is still little or no understanding in the international community, among policy makers or the general public of the disabling nature of the disease.

IFPA Executive Committee Treasurer Josef de Guzman, who has extensive experience in working with psoriasis and disability issues in the Philippines and the WHO Western Pacific Region, has often encountered this lack of understanding:

"Today, not many people think of psoriasis as a disability but this needs to change. People with psoriasis suffer a number of limitations and restrictions in their lives due to their impairments and are faced with enormous barriers as they try to interact with society. Just because you have psoriasis it doesn't mean that you don't have hopes and dreams like anyone else, yet physical impairments, stigma, discrimination and negative attitudes among the public hinder people with psoriasis from full and equal participation in society."

To raise the awareness and understanding of how psoriasis can be disabling, IFPA recognized the need for an issue brief on this important matter. Even with the, often severe, physical and social challenges and barriers that confront people with psoriasis, they regularly find themselves excluded from national disability programs.

Kathleen Gallant, IFPA Secretary and Chair of the IFPA Task Force on Noncommunicable diseases, explains the importance of the calls to action in the issue brief:"Most don't realize how disabling psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis can be, especially in terms of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The International Day of Persons with Disabilities is an excellent opportunity to call for inclusion of psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis into both international and national health and disability forums and strategies to ensure that persons living with these diseases are given the opportunities they need and deserve.

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About the issue brief:

The issue brief, titled "Psoriasis can be disabling but shouldn't be a barrier to full participation in society" is launched on the International Day of People with Disabilities, December 3, 2014, and is available for download at www.ifpa-pso.org.

Calls for action in the issue brief:

- Acknowledge that psoriasis, regardless of its severity, continues to hinder people with the disease from their full and effective participation in society, and that governments, the United Nations agencies and other international organizations include psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis in disability forums and policy;
- Include the rights of persons with disabilities in the post-2015 agenda on disability and development;
- Encourage governments to integrate psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis in their national health and disability plans;
- Raise awareness of the serious nature of psoriasis to help fight stigma and discrimination and remove barriers that hinder people with psoriasis from participating fully and equally in society; and,

- Encourage member states to initiate mechanisms that will protect people with psoriasis from discrimination, stigmatization and vilification.

About the International Federation of Psoriasis Associations, IFPA

The International Federation of Psoriasis Associations, IFPA, is the non-profit umbrella organization for the majority of psoriasis associations from around the world. Today, IFPA has more than 50 member associations covering all regions of the world. IFPA's mission is to be the unifying global voice of all psoriasis associations, supporting, strengthening and promoting their cause at an international level.

You can learn more about psoriasis and disability by watching our film, "Psoriasis is a disabling disease", here.

Please visit our website www.ifpa-pso.org to learn more about IFPA, our members and our activities.

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