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*This paper was prepared by the Group's secretariat Decideum Ltd**

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PURPOSE AND AIMS

The APPGS was established in 1994 and aims to increase understanding about skin care issues in Parliament and to achieve improvements in the treatment and management of patients with skin disease. It also provides an unbiased means of responding to threats to dermatology services and acts as a forum for partners in skin care to engage with politicians with an interest in the issue.

The APPGS maintains the following broad set of aims:

- To raise awareness of skin related issues in Parliament.
- To improve the treatment and management of patients with skin conditions.
- To provide an unbiased means of responding to threats to dermatology.
- To provide a forum for all skin interested stakeholders.
- To advise and make recommendations to Government, on improving the management and treatment of skin related conditions.

PRIORITIES FOR 2016-17

1. England-wide audit of waiting times

- The APPGS has long been concerned that dermatology services across England are overwhelmed, due to shortages at the consultant level and insufficient training at the primary care level. The Centre for Workforce Intelligence has agreed that there is a 30% deficit in the number of dermatologist consultants. Based on the size of the UK population there are 339 fewer dermatologists than needed.¹ The APPGS has therefore chosen to promote, as its priority workstream for the rest of 2016, an audit of dermatology waiting times across England.
- In 2015 the Dermatology Council for England conducted an audit of a small selection of trusts providing dermatology services (38 in total). Whilst this research only examined waiting times for urgent non-cancer referrals, it indicated lengthy waiting times in trusts with consultant level vacancies.² **The APPGS will build on this research to examine average, urgent and cancer referral times across all dermatology trusts in England. This investigation will be conducted via a thorough FOI exercise of all dermatology trusts of which the APPGS is aware.**

2. Early Diagnosis of Skin Cancer

- The APPGS believes that pressures on primary care, coupled with poor GP training on dermatology may be negatively impacting on early skin cancer diagnosis. In 2014 there were 2459 deaths from malignant melanoma and the APPGS believes that, with the appropriate education and up-skilling of the GP workforce, this figure can be reduced.³ Increasing GP knowledge of skin cancers will also help to reduce inappropriate referrals to secondary care, which are increasing the burden on specialist dermatology departments. The APPGS believes that this work should also look at awareness campaigns conducted at the patient level.
- **For 2016-17 the APPGS will focus on raising awareness of the need to improve early diagnosis of skin cancer through Parliamentary engagement and further investigatory work.** The APPGS may seek to partner with patient groups in this exercise. The FOI exercise could incorporate an assessment of the number of suspected skin cancer referrals that do not result in further treatment.

3. Undergraduate Education

- 24% of the population consults a GP each year because of a skin complaint and skin disease is one of the most common reasons for a new consultation with GPs.⁴ However GPs receive on average only 6 days training in

dermatology during the whole of their time as an undergraduate and postgraduate medical student.⁵ As such, many doctors will enter general practice with limited knowledge and understanding of one of the most common patient issues with which they will deal.

- The APPGS is currently working with the Dermatology Council for England (DCE) to establish what formal provision there is for undergraduate dermatology education across England. **The APPGS will work to promote the findings of the DCE in Parliament and will continue to engage with key stakeholders, such as Health Education England and the Royal College of GPs, to drive awareness of the issue.**
- The APPGS is also aware that the Primary Care Dermatology Society and the British Association of Dermatologists are working together with NHS England to improve the credentialing of GPs in dermatology. The APPGS will follow this work stream closely and provide further support where necessary.

4. The Protection of European Union Research Funding

- The European research landscape is complex and both the European Union and individual European countries fund research. Following the vote to leave the European Union, there are concerns across the scientific community about the UK's ability to fund future research and about reports of UK scientists being dropped from EU partnerships.
- **The APPGS will engage with Parliamentarians across the political spectrum to ensure that the importance of continued research funding for dermatology is recognised.** In addition, the APPGS will seek to work with other organisations whose research grants are under threat, perhaps including the Royal Society, Cancer Research UK, medical societies and special interest groups and some universities, acting as a driver of efforts to raise the profile of this concern for the whole community. It will partner closely with BAD and others to do this.

¹ <https://www.rcplondon.ac.uk/sites/default/files/dermatology.pdf>

² <http://www.appgs.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/DCE-FOI-Report-2015-Final.pdf>

³ image: http://www.cancerresearchuk.org/sites/default/files/csglance_skin_cases_1.png

⁴ NI

⁵ Chiang Y et al Burge SM 2008 BJD 159 Suppl 1 p1