A major question facing dermatologists and other providers is how do acne treatments compare to each other. In today’s economic climate, it’s not possible to conduct the head-to-head trials of available acne medications in order to gather these important comparative data. Statistical analysis of available trial data can be done using meta analysis, but the quality of these analyses relies on consistency in how the acne was evaluated in each trial, or in other words, consistency in the outcome measures for acne.

In 2011, the National Institute of Arthritis, Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases (NIAMS) had a call for grant applications to develop standardized outcome measures for clinical trials in skin diseases. This served as an opportunity for an international group of dermatology clinicians and researchers with a long-standing interest in acne to combine their efforts and form the Acne Core Outcomes Research Network (ACORN). The overarching goal of ACORN is to develop improved outcome measures of acne for use in clinical trials. It is hoped that once the outcome measures are developed and validated that they may be adopted by the research community; thus allowing for generation of data that will facilitate comparison of acne treatments that in turn can help guide treatment decisions.

In July 2013, we received the good news that the ACORN project would be funded by a cooperative research agreement with NIAMS! Our projects are getting off the ground. We are establishing a scientific advisory board, seeking additional members to our network, establishing industry partnerships and developing a soon-to-be-available website where you can learn more about our group’s efforts. (www.acnecoreoutcomes.org)

Meet the Teams!

The Acne Core Outcomes Research Network consists of international teams headed by Drs. Alison Layton and Anne Eady at Harrogate in the United Kingdom, Dr. Jerry Tan and Marc Frey in Windsor, Canada and Dr. Diane Thiboutot at the Pennsylvania State University in the United States. Dr. Meg Chren from UCSF lends her expertise in development and evaluation of quality of life measures. We have assembled a group of statisticians with expertise in analysis of clinical trial data and quality of life measures and a librarian to assist the group with systematic reviews. Canfield Scientific is our first industry partner and will be collaborating with ACORN on assessing novel technologies for acne lesion counting. Moving forward we hope to engage more providers, patients and industry partners in our efforts to improve the study of acne.