

Researchers see the light over new treatment

Researchers at Salford Royal NHS Foundation Trust have tested a new way to treat a disfiguring skin condition.

Telangiectases are knot-like clusters of blood vessels on the skin which can occur in 30 to 50 per cent of patients with systemic sclerosis, a potentially serious and incurable autoimmune condition that affects connective tissue.

Telangiectases tend to occur on the face, neck and upper limbs and can cause psychological issues for patients.

Currently, doctors use laser treatment to blast the telangiectases and destroy them but this treatment can be painful at the time and result in bruising afterwards so researchers have been looking for an alternative.

Salford Royal is one of only a handful of Trusts in the UK specialising in systemic sclerosis, also known as scleroderma, and Consultant Rheumatologist Ariane Herrick, also Professor of Rheumatology at The University of Manchester, is a leading UK expert in the condition.

As part of the Trust's and University's wide range of studies to improve care of scleroderma patients, researchers tested using intense pulsed light (IPL) instead of laser treatment. IPL is often used cosmetically for treating birthmarks and for hair removal.

Their pilot study treated 19 patients with telangiectases, using IPL on one side of the face and laser treatment on the other. They had three treatments over the course of eight weeks before the results were analysed using close-up photographs and specialist imaging.

The research showed that the effects were roughly comparable but IPL had fewer side effects.

Salford Royal Rheumatology researcher Dr Graham Dinsdale, who is also a Research Associate at The University of Manchester, said: "While this was only a small-scale pilot study, it does suggest the potential for an alternative, less painful, treatment for telangiectases. We will continue to do all we can to find new and better treatments for patients with systemic sclerosis, which is a very serious and debilitating condition."

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Notes for the Editor

- The study was funded by the Raynaud's & Scleroderma Association.