A person in silhouette stands in a dark cave, looking out through an opening at a bright, sunlit beach and ocean. The scene is dramatic, with the cave's interior in deep shadow and the exterior scene brightly lit. The person is centered in the frame, looking towards the right.

# **HOW TO FIGHT ATOPIC DERMATITIS MISINFORMATION IN SOCIAL MEDIA**

# SCRATCHING THE SURFACE: MISINFORMATION IN ATOPIC DERMATITIS

Dr Cathal O'Connor

Consultant Dermatologist

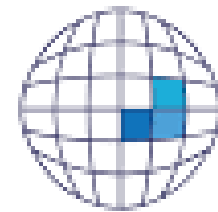
Dual-trained Consultant Pediatrician

Cork University Hospital, University College Cork, Ireland



# UCC

University College Cork, Ireland  
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh



# ISAD

INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY OF ATOPIC DERMATITIS



Ospidéal na hOllscoile Corcaigh  
Cork University Hospital





# MISINFORMATION

- ‘Post-truth’
- *Objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief*
- WHO – greatest threat to global health <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> World Health Organization. Immunizing the public against misinformation. Available at: <https://www.who.int/news-room/feature-stories/detail/immunizing-the-public-against-misinformation>

# ATOPIC DERMATITIS

- Complex multifactorial etiology <sup>2</sup>
- High risk of misinformation <sup>3</sup>
- 2/3 YouTube videos poor or very poor <sup>4</sup>
  
- What misinformation is available online?

<sup>2</sup> Weidinger S et al. Atopic dermatitis. *Nat Rev Dis Primers* 2018; 4: 1–20.

<sup>3</sup> United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Journalism, 'fake news' and disinformation: a handbook for journalism education and training.*

<sup>4</sup> Mueller SM et al. Fiction, falsehoods, and few facts: cross-sectional study on the content-related quality of atopic eczema-related videos on YouTube. *J Med Internet Res* 2020; 22: e15599.



# METHODS



('atopic dermatitis' OR 'atopic eczema' OR 'eczema')

AND

('misinformation' OR 'disinformation' OR 'conspiracy theories')



133 abstracts



1 paper



**Fiction, Falsehoods, and Few Facts:  
Cross-Sectional Study on the  
Content-Related Quality of Atopic  
Eczema-Related Videos on YouTube**

Simon M Mueller, MD, Valentina N S Hongler, BMed,  
[...], and Oliver Brandt, MD

# METHODS

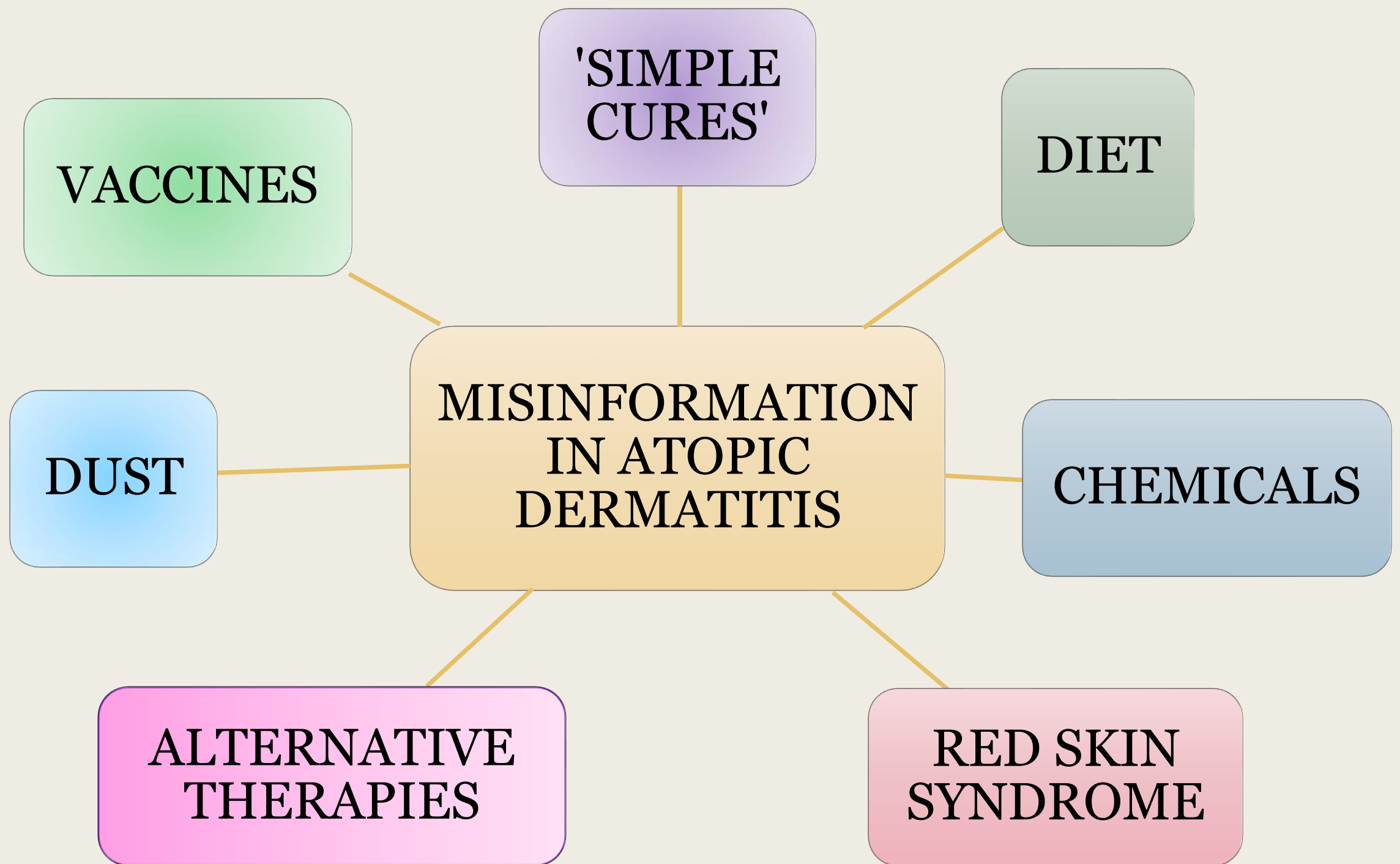


Combinations of:

‘atopic dermatitis’, ‘atopic eczema’, ‘eczema’ and  
‘misinformation’, ‘disinformation’ and ‘conspiracy theories’

First 10 pages reviewed for novel information



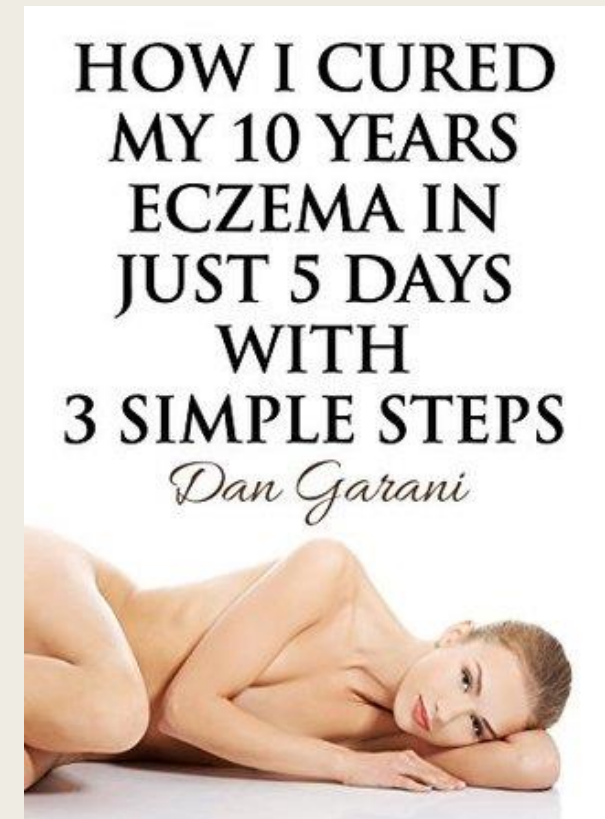
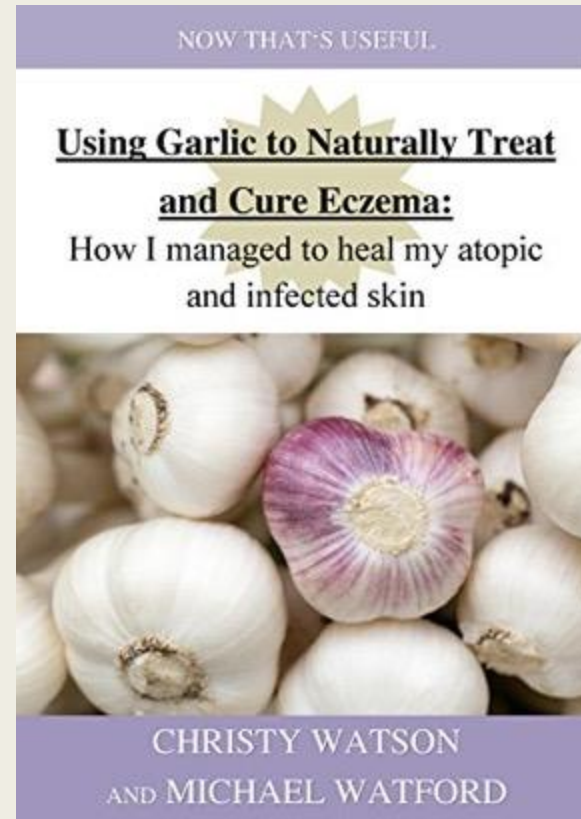




# 'SIMPLE CURES'

## How to cure eczema in a MONTH:

- 'Hidden' cause
- Various recommended 'cures'
- Short timeline
  
- Ignores multifactorial etiology





# DIET

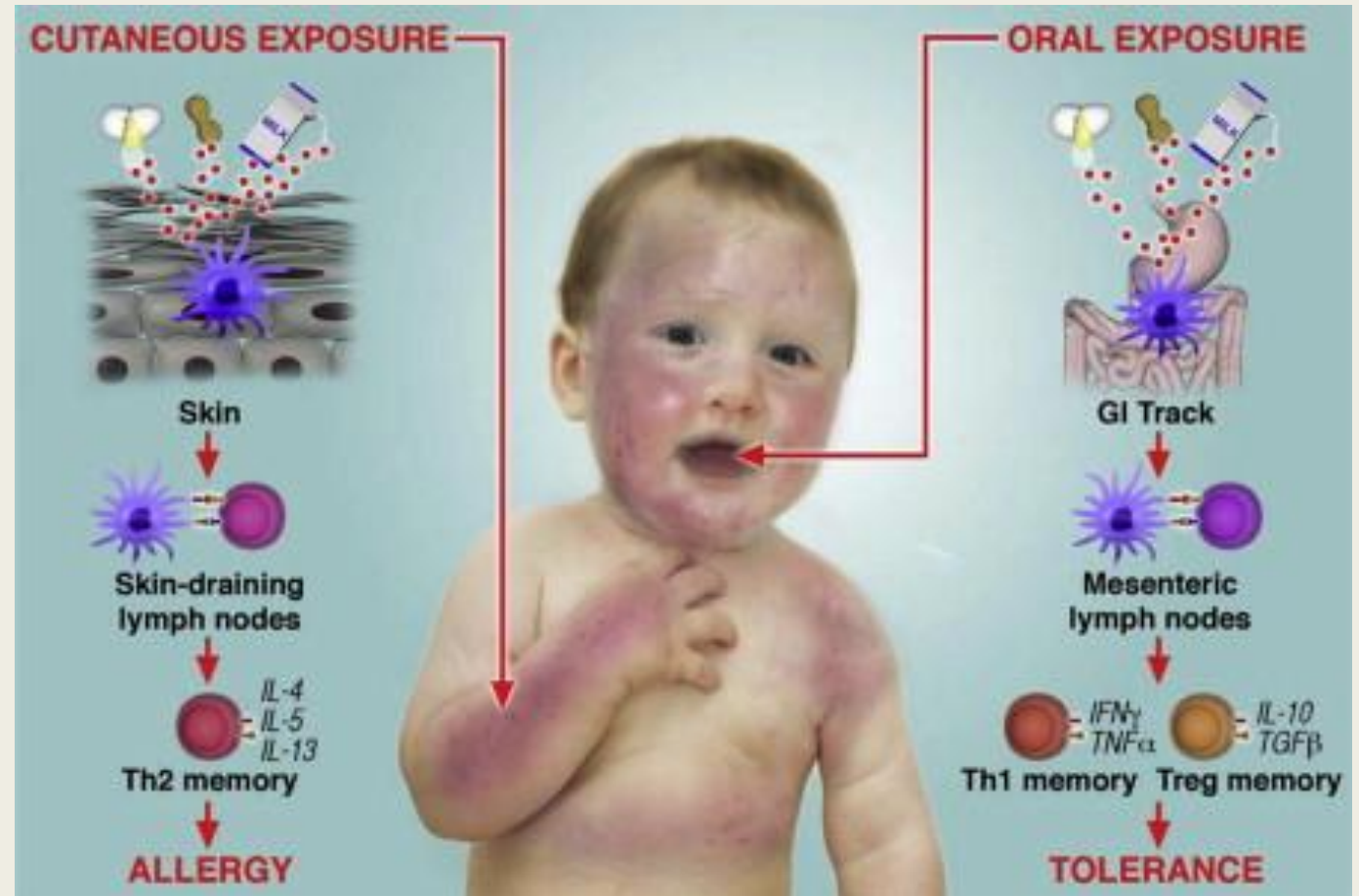
- Multiple exclusions recommended
- Vegan diets
- Leaky gut syndrome

Girl CURES Her Severe Eczema with 80% RAW FOOD DIET



# DIET

- Skin barrier disruption
- Epicutaneous food protein exposure
- Allergic sensitization <sup>5</sup>
  
- Paradoxical increase in food allergy with restriction <sup>6</sup>



<sup>5</sup> Lack G. Update on risk factors for food allergy. *J Allergy Clin Immunol* 2012; 129: 1187–97.

<sup>6</sup> Eapen AA, et al. Oral food challenge failures among foods restricted because of atopic dermatitis. *Ann Allergy Asthma Immunol* 2019; 122: 193–7.

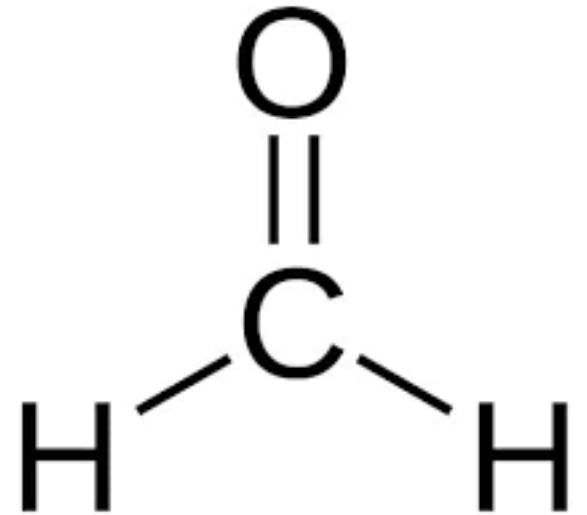
# CHEMICALS

- Formaldehyde conspiracy
- Detergent conspiracy

DEBORAH BLUM

SCIENCE 10.10.2012 02:13 PM

## The Formaldehyde Conspiracy



### The Detergent Conspiracy

Why your clothes are less clean each time you wash them?

# DUST

- Air purifiers touted
- House dust may exacerbate but not cause AD





# 5G

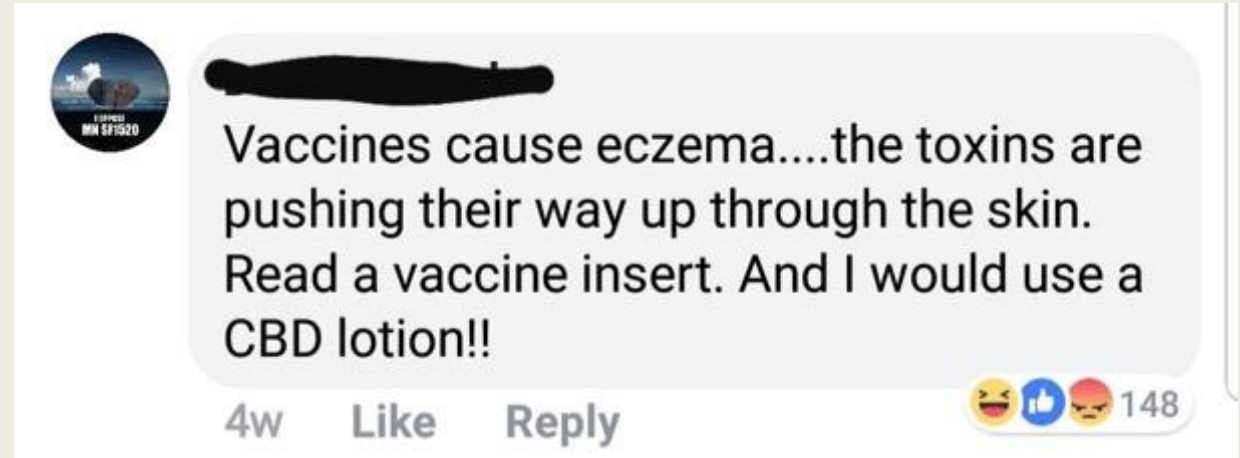
- Infrequently attributed!



Electrical Sensitivity

# VACCINES

- Immune responses or ingredients
- Example of eczema vaccinatum abused



# TOPICAL THERAPIES

- Emollients

## Order Summary

PRODUCT

SUBTOTAL

Explain Execzema × 1

£49.00

- Inappropriate combinations



# TOPICAL THERAPIES

- ‘Topical steroid withdrawal’
  - BAD/NES statement<sup>7</sup>

## Understanding Red Skin Syndrome

**HORRIFIC PAIN** Graphic pictures reveal the horror of eczema sufferer ‘skinned alive’ by addiction to steroid cream



**National Eczema Society and British Association of Dermatologists joint  
position statement on Topical Steroid Withdrawal  
January 2021**

<sup>7</sup> National Eczema Society and British Association of Dermatologists. Joint position statement on topical steroid withdrawal. Available at: <https://eczema.org/wp-content/uploads/Topical-Steroid-Withdrawal-position-statement.pdf>



# 'NATURAL' THERAPIES

- Apple cider vinegar, calendula, witch hazel etc
- Potentially fatal <sup>8</sup>
- Herbal ointments <sup>9</sup>



<sup>8</sup> Krugel N. Dermatologist Laurie Parsons said rash didn't look like childhood eczema.

Available at: [https:// www.cbc.ca/news/canada/calgary/jeromie-jennifer-clarktrial- 1.4856158](https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/calgary/jeromie-jennifer-clarktrial-1.4856158)

<sup>9</sup> Keane FM, Munn SE, du Vivier AW et al. Analysis of Chinese herbal creams prescribed for dermatological conditions. BMJ 1999; 318: 563-4.

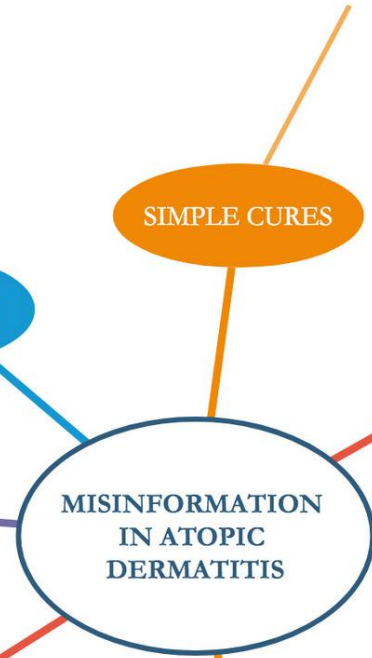
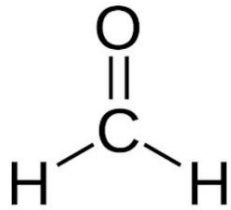
# How to cure eczema in a MONTH:



Vaccines cause eczema....the toxins are pushing their way up through the skin. Read a vaccine insert. And I would use a CBD lotion!!

4w Like Reply

👍👎🗨️ 148



RED SKIN SYNDROME

**HORRIFIC PAIN** Graphic pictures reveal the horror of eczema sufferer 'skinned alive' by addiction to steroid cream

**Girl CURES Her Severe Eczema with 80% RAW FOOD DIET**



# Scratching the surface: a review of online misinformation and conspiracy theories in atopic dermatitis

C. O'Connor<sup>1,2</sup>  and M. Murphy<sup>1,2</sup> 

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doi:10.1111/ced.14679

*Clin Exp Dermatol* 2023; **48**:112–115  
<https://doi.org/10.1093/ced/llac019>  
Advance access publication date: 25 October 2022

CED  
Clinical and Experimental Dermatology  
Concise Report

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## #corticophobia: a review on online misinformation related to topical steroids

Paula Finnegan<sup>1</sup> ,<sup>1</sup> Michelle Murphy<sup>1,2</sup>  and Cathal O'Connor<sup>1,2</sup> 

<sup>1</sup>Department of Dermatology, South Infirmery Victoria University Hospital, Cork, Ireland

<sup>2</sup>Department of Medicine, University College Cork, Cork, Ireland

# FEEDBACK

**Topical steroid withdrawal is not a myth. Comment on ‘#corticophobia: a review on online misinformation related to topical steroids’**

Linked article: Finnegan P *et al. Clin Exp Dermatol* 2023; **48**:112–5.

<https://doi.org/10.1093/ced/llad062>

## **#CORTICOPHOBIA – WORST ARTICLE I EVER READ!**

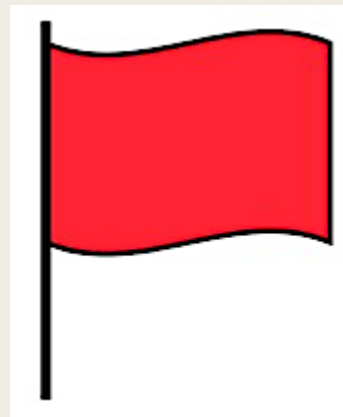
14/02/2023 by Ruth Holroyd – [Leave a Comment](#)

**Topical steroid phobia**, or ‘Corticophobia’ a phrase coined by dermatologists to help them categorise the hysteria of their patients, is possibly one of the most insulting phrases I’ve heard in relation to eczema and topical steroid withdrawal.



# DISCUSSION

- AD associated with huge disruption to QOL
- Misinformation has serious consequences
- Red flags
  - ‘Cure’
  - *Companies selling products*
- HCP should refute/rebut misinformation <sup>10</sup>



**NATIONAL**  
**Calgary baby death trial hears rash suggested nutritional deficiency, not eczema**

# CONCLUSION

- ‘The Golden Age of Ignorance’
- Dermatologists should be aware of misinformation and challenge it





A large, historic stone building with a central tower, illuminated at dusk, surrounded by a green lawn and trees. The building features a prominent central tower with a clock face and a cross on top. The windows are lit up, and the sky is a deep blue. The foreground shows a well-maintained green lawn with a paved path curving through it. There are some trees and bushes in the foreground, and a flagpole with a flag is visible on the right side of the building.

**Thank you**