How common is generalized pustular psoriasis in Malaysia?

Generalized pustular psoriasis (GPP) is a rarer form of psoriasis with recurrent eruptions and/or flares of painful, pus-filled blisters over large areas of the skin. Patients also often have general symptoms such as fatigue and fever. GPP sometimes affects other parts of the body such as the heart, lungs or joints. In patients with severe cases, the condition can also be life-threatening.

More information is needed regarding how many people are living with GPP worldwide. In this study, undertaken in Malaysia, we looked at the total number of people with GPP at any time during a year (annual prevalence) and the number of new cases of the disease in a specified period (incidence of GPP) in Johor Bahru, Malaysia.

Between 2010 and 2020, 230 people were estimated to be living with GPP in a Malaysian population of 1.1 million, resulting in a prevalence of 198 individuals with GPP per one million people (0.02%). Prevalence and incidence rates were higher in women than in men, and higher in people with Chinese ethnicity than in people in Malay or Indian ethnic groups.

Of the 230 patients with GPP, 153 (67%) also had plaque psoriasis. The onset of GPP commonly occurred between age 20–29 years and age 50–59 years in this population. The onset of GPP occurred at a later age in patients who also had plaque psoriasis than in patients with GPP alone. Common factors triggering GPP flares included withdrawal of medication (systemic corticosteroids in particular), infections, pregnancy, stress and menstruation.

This study provides, for the first time, information on the burden of GPP in Malaysia. These findings will help with healthcare planning and providing treatment for patients with GPP in Malaysia.