

Q10: What is the etymology of 'psor' in psoriasis and psoralen?

A: In psoriasis it comes from an initially ancient Greek word for itch (transliterated as “psor”) that was then borrowed by Latin and is now used in ‘psoriasis’ in many languages including English. So, the term emphasises the importance of itch for many with psoriasis, which is often severe.

The etymology is likely different for the ‘psor’ of psoralen with the scientific name of a common leguminous plant source of psoralens being *Psoralea corylifolium* and this probably being from Greek ‘psoraleos’ meaning roughly scabby referring to some of the appearance of this plant which also has leaves (‘folia’) a bit like those of the Hazelnut tree (genus *Corylus*).

Another ‘psor’ that can cause confusion is that in “Psoracomb” – these are small devices, usually fitted with UVB lamps, often used to treat localised psoriasis (although there are many other indications such as vitiligo and peristomal dermatitis). Here the ‘psor’ refers to psoriasis not to psoralen.