

## **To the 25th Expert Committee on Selection and Use of Essential Medicines**

**Beijing, China**

**15 April 2025**

### **Letter of Support for Application A-30**

#### **Urea- and Glycerol-Based Topical Moisturizers – Atopic Dermatitis**

I am a physician and Professor of Dermatology based in China, with over 40 years of experience in clinical practice, research, and medical education in the field of allergic skin diseases, particularly atopic dermatitis (AD). Over the years, I have been involved in numerous national and regional projects to improve dermatological care and promote equitable access to treatment across both urban and rural populations in China.

National guidelines in China, consistent with global best practices, recommend the use of anti-inflammatory therapy combined with regular skin care using emollients as first-line management for AD. However, access to affordable, high-quality moisturizers remains a critical gap in care. In China, emollients are not reimbursed by public insurance, forcing families to bear the full cost. For low-income families in rural or peri-urban areas, the monthly expense of emollient therapy can consume a substantial portion of their disposable income, discouraging long-term adherence.

This issue is further compounded by regulatory classifications that treat emollients as cosmetic products rather than therapeutic agents, subjecting them to high taxation and limited procurement through hospital systems.

I therefore strongly support the inclusion of affordable emollients – particularly those containing 5% urea or 15–20% glycerol – in the WHO Model List of Essential Medicines (EML). These formulations have been extensively studied, are clinically effective, and represent a cost-effective, evidence-based component of comprehensive AD care.

Inclusion of these moisturizers in the WHO EML would be a transformative step toward advancing dermatologic equity, not only for Chinese patients but globally. Such a designation would also help support advocacy efforts in China to reclassify emollients appropriately within the healthcare system and improve coverage under public insurance schemes.

As a dermatologist, I see firsthand how untreated or poorly managed AD severely affects quality of life – particularly for children who suffer from intense itching, sleep disruption, and secondary infections. Access to effective skin care should not be a privilege, but a basic right.

I respectfully urge the WHO Expert Committee to consider this inclusion, which would align with global health priorities and deliver tangible benefits to hundreds of millions affected by AD – including the growing patient population in China.

Sincerely,

**Prof. Lin Ma**

Professor of Dermatology, Beijing Children's Hospital, Capital Medical University, Beijing,  
China