

Wendy Smith Begolka, MBS

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Wendy Smith Begolka is the Chief Strategy Officer – Research, Medical & Community Affairs for the National Eczema Association (NEA), where she guides the evolution and growth of research and medical efforts across the organization and with key stakeholders. Her present efforts at NEA focus on enhancing and catalyzing eczema research through 1) diversifying research funding through NEA's grant program, 2) leading patient-centered research and data collection, and 3) fostering research knowledge and engagement in the patient/caregiver community. These collective efforts center on identifying gaps and opportunities to develop meaningful and sustainable contributions of the eczema lived experience in research so that treatment interventions and care conversations address the myriad of symptoms, comorbidities, and quality of life impacts faced by eczema patients and caregivers of all races and ages over the course of a lifetime.

Prior to joining NEA, Ms. Smith Begolka conducted biomedical laboratory research at Northwestern University in the Department of Microbiology-Immunology, and subsequently oversaw the American Academy of Dermatology's application of science for the development of guidelines of care and public-facing information. Her career has focused on advancing research, the use of scientific findings to support improved therapeutic options and patient care and outcomes, and translation of research data for educational, quality, and regulatory initiatives with diverse audiences. She brings a unique triad of perspectives from working in bench research at a professional medical association, and now in patient advocacy, to address gaps in amplifying the patient experience and patient-centered outcomes in research and care. Ms. Smith Begolka holds a master's degree in biomedical sciences from the Mayo Clinic, and she has authored and contributed to over 50 peer-reviewed publications, including most recently a series of publications on out-of-pocket costs for atopic dermatitis.