

Nine in ten skin doctors and nurses claim 'recession to blame' for increase in stress-related diseases

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A new survey revealed nine in ten dermatologists and dermatology nurses have seen an increase in stress related skin conditions since the start of the recession.

The snapshot survey by the charity the British Skin Foundation (BSF), asked the medical professionals if they had experienced an increase in conditions triggered by stress or trauma since the start of the recession, such as eczema or psoriasis. 48 per cent stated that they had seen a slight increase, whilst a further 41 per cent claimed a 'noticeable increase' in those sorts of conditions.

Conducted during the British Association of Dermatologists' Annual Conference in July*, 105 of the medical professionals were asked a series of questions relating to the recession's impact on their patients, and the effect it had emotionally on sufferers. Of the conditions they felt had increased, 65 per cent cited eczema, followed by a quarter of respondents who said they had seen the biggest increase in cases of psoriasis.

The survey also revealed a strong belief that more could be done to help people living with skin diseases deal with any underlying problems on top of a patient's own symptoms. Close to half (48 per cent) of dermatologists and dermatology nurses said that the psychological effects of skin disease needed to be taken more seriously within the medical community. A further four in ten (39 per cent) said more services, such as counselling, ought to be more readily available on the NHS to help tackle the underlying issues that often 'trigger' skin diseases like eczema or cause flare ups in existing conditions.

The results of this survey follow the news in May in which the BSF highlighted the shocking psychosocial and emotional problems experienced by people in the UK living with a skin disease. 47 per cent of the 729 participants said they had been victims of verbal abuse one or more times from a member of the public. One in six (16 per cent) people said their skin condition had led them to self-harming, and another 17 per cent (125 respondents) said they had contemplated suicide at some stage. Seven participants had attempted suicide in the past.

Dr Anthony Bewley, a spokesperson for the British Skin Foundation and a psychodermatologist, says: "Patients with skin disease often feel enormously upset about their skin condition, as it affects their confidence and self-esteem in so many different ways. All too often the impact of skin disease is underestimated. Many patients consider their skin conditions to be more psychologically damaging than

diabetes or heart disease.”

Bevis Man of the British Skin Foundation says: “We know that living with skin disease can have a huge impact on a person’s self-confidence, personal relationships and career. The recession brings with it a set of problems that will add further stress and misery to the millions who already live with a skin disease in the UK. One way of combating this is to bring aspects like counselling much further forward into the limelight and integrate it successfully alongside the more typical and accepted treatments for skin disease.”

Summary of key findings from the survey:

The psychological and emotional impact of skin disease

- Needs to be taken more seriously by the dermatological community: 48%
- Is already being taken seriously enough: 12%
- More services, such as counselling, can be offered by the NHS to tackle underlying problems: 39%

The impact of the recession on skin disease

- It has caused a slight increase in conditions that are typically triggered by stress or trauma (e.g. eczema): 48%
- There has been a noticeable increase in conditions typically triggered by stress: 41%
- There has been a huge increase in conditions triggered by stress: 5%

The skin diseases that have increased according to those who took part

- Eczema/Dermatitis: 65%
- Psoriasis: 26%
- Acne: 3%
- Vitiligo: 2%

-Ends-

For more information about the survey, contact Bevis Man, Communication’s Manager at the British Skin Foundation. Phone: 0207 391 6347, email: bevis@britishskinfoundation.org.uk, Website: www.britishskinfoundation.org.uk

The British Skin Foundation (BSF) is a charity committed to raising funds for skin disease research. 100% of the money raised for the charity goes back into funding vital research. Over the last four years, the BSF has awarded in excess of £3.3 million to numerous studies, £2 million of which has been dedicated to research into the various types of skin cancer.

*Survey was conducted at the British Association of Dermatologists’ Annual Conference, 3rd - 5th July 2012. A total of 540 Consultant Dermatologists attended, of which 105 members took part in the survey.