



Newsletter

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Psoriasis, Stress, Depression and Serotonin

What better way to acknowledge National Psoriasis Awareness month, than share recent research on a novel therapeutic approach to treating this common skin disease.

Psoriasis is a chronic inflammatory immune system disorder resulting in itchy, red, dry patches on the skin that can vary in intensity from a mere nuisance to being physically and socially debilitating. Psoriasis is often triggered by chronic stress and can lead to severe depression. Many researchers have recently examined the role of serotonin and its expression on skin cells as well as its correlation to cortisol levels and depressive symptoms, and the results are profound.

One study of 20 patients with chronic plaque psoriasis found a positive correlation between serotonin-positive cells in the psoriatic skin and a negative correlation between the same cells and salivary cortisol levels, which suggests that chronic stress and serotonin expression are associated. Another study found that depressive symptoms were reported more often in psoriatic patients than healthy controls. It is postulated that this combination of symptoms and deficiencies may be a vicious cycle where chronic stress is causing an inflammatory response of psoriatic skin lesions thereby decreasing the quality of life and increasing depressive symptoms and completing the circle with repeated chronic stress.

Other studies analyzed how increased serotonin stores may minimize symptoms and flare-ups. In one study, 11 psoriasis patients showed improvements in lesion severity and anxiety levels after 8 weeks of relaxation and cognition exercises. Another study of 37 patients, randomly assigned meditative exercises, experienced greater clearance of lesions than the control group. The endogenous increase in serotonin may be at play here.

Given these correlations, assessing serotonin and cortisol levels as part of comprehensive urinary neurotransmitter and salivary hormone evaluations may provide greater insight into successful, targeted and individualized treatment approaches for patients experiencing the painful, itchy, sometimes embarrassing skin lesions and concomitant crippling depression of psoriasis. Test Now. Treat Right.

Resources

1. Griffiths CE, Richards HL. Psychological influences in psoriasis. Clin Exp Dermatol. 2001; 26: 338-

42.

2. Tencomnao T, Wongpiyabovorn. An investigation of the relationship between serotonin transporter gene promoter polymorphism and psoriasis susceptibility in a Thai population. *Gene Mol Res.* 2010; 9: 2275-82.
3. Thorslund K, et al. The expression of serotonin transporter protein correlates with the severity of psoriasis and chronic stress. *Arch Dermatol Res.* 2013; 305: 99-104.
4. Mossner R, et al. Analysis of a functional serotonin transporter promoter polymorphism in psoriasis vulgaris. *Arch Dermatol Res.* 2009; 301: 443-47.

Upcoming events

Labrix Advanced Workshop
February 1-2, 2014
[Register Here](#)