

NEWS, VIEWS, & REVIEWS



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Impact of Psoriasis on Women

Psoriasis is a common, chronic inflammatory skin disease that can affect any part of the body. It is a highly visible condition with symptoms that include the appearance of red, thick, scaly patches on the arms, legs, trunk, soles of the feet, palms, and nails, but most commonly on the elbows, knees, and scalp.

The effects of psoriasis cut a deep path through women's social and emotional lives. Sociology and psychology experts say psoriasis taps into complex realities about how women are perceived in society. Women without clear skin are viewed as shy, lonely, boring, and introverted, while those with clear skin are perceived as intelligent, happy, healthy, and creative.¹ Women may also feel more pressure or prefer to wear clothing that reveals their skin in areas such as the arms, legs, upper chest, and feet.

Many factors can exacerbate psoriasis including hormone fluctuations and stress. The disease can have a profound negative effect on patients' lives and can especially affect the quality of life of female patients. It can affect their social lives, their sense of self-esteem, and make them feel socially isolated. In recent studies, women report higher levels of stigmatization, a strong predictor of quality of life.²

In an effort to cover up the symptoms of the disease, women will alter their lifestyle and clothing choices and may not consider seeking help from a skin care professional who can help diagnose and successfully treat their condition.

Recent advances have changed the treatment options for psoriasis. In addition to systemic medications, such as biologics, an array of topical treatments with or without steroids are available in the form of lotions, creams, ointments, shampoos, foams, and sprays. Topical treatments can provide relief of the physical symptoms and help to address psoriasis flare-ups. Ultraviolet light therapy has become a safe option for treating lesions and provides additional options for patients seeking help from their dermatologist.

The opportunity exists for aesthetic clinicians to initiate discussions and offer guidance for their patients with psoriasis. Those of us practicing aesthetic dermatology realize that the benefits to our patients extend far beyond improving their outward appearance, as we see improvement in self-esteem and emotional well being every day in our patients. Patients with psoriasis may not be aware of the host of treatments available, or may be unwilling to reveal their symptoms, while others may simply be unaware that they have a psoriatic condition.

Discussing concerns with a dermatologist may help to lessen the emotional burden of psoriatic disease and help empower patients suffering with dermatologic effects. With an enhanced therapeutic armamentarium, dermatologists can support and reassure psoriasis patients about the management of the physical symptoms and be ready to help form a comprehensive and successful treatment plan.

REFERENCES

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