Acne Confounds Accutane Depression & Suicide Correlation

By ACSH Staff — September 17, 2010

Severe acne is more likely [1] to cause suicide and depression in young people, not the drug Accutane often used to treat it, a new study [2] published in the Journal of Investigative Dermatology finds.

The study indicates that depression is strongly linked to severe acne and suggests that the condition is more likely to be associated with suicide and depression than the drug, Accutane, often used to treat it. The Norwegian scientists surveyed 3,775 18- and 19-year olds in Oslo and found that twice as many girls and three times as many boys with severe acne reported having suicidal thoughts than those with little or no acne. Previous studies claim that Accutane’s generic equivalent, isotretinoin, doubles the risk of developing depression and many parents have blamed the drug for their children’s depression, attempted suicide, or suicide.

According to this study, says ACSH's Dr. Gilbert Ross, “the fact that kids who take Accutane for severe acne have a higher rate of depression, thus blaming their suicide on Accutane is actually a confounder — that is, there isn’t a real cause and effect relationship. As someone who in my younger days had rather severe acne and took Accutane, I can attest to the fact that having severe acne as a teenager is a very clear reason to be depressed.”


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