RESEARCH: MISCONCEPTIONS LEAD TO NEGATIVE PERCEPTIONS OF ACNE
*Treatment can help improve patients’ quality of life*

Washington
March 4, 2016

OVERVIEW
Although acne is an extremely common skin problem, several misconceptions about this condition still exist. According to new research presented at the American Academy of Dermatology’s 74th Annual Meeting in Washington, acne patients are often perceived negatively by others, which may affect patients’ quality of life. A board-certified dermatologist can provide effective treatment to help acne patients manage their condition.

AMERICAN ACADEMY OF DERMATOLOGY EXPERT
Information provided by board-certified dermatologist Alexa Boer Kimball, MD, MPH, FAAD, director, Clinical Unit for Research Trials and Outcomes in Skin (CURTIS) and professor of dermatology, Harvard Medical School, Boston.

SKIN AND STIGMA
People’s perceptions of and reactions to skin disease can have a significant impact on patients, Dr. Kimball says. To get a better idea of this impact, she decided to research the stigma associated with various skin conditions.

Acne is the most common skin condition in the United States, affecting up to 50 million Americans every year.1 Despite the prevalence of this condition, Dr. Kimball’s research indicates that people still harbor some misconceptions about acne, she says, and these misconceptions contribute to negative perceptions and reactions that can impact patients’ quality of life.

“Acne is a very visible condition, and it affects many patients during adolescence, when they’re especially vulnerable,” Dr. Kimball says. “When acne persists into adulthood, so can its effects on self-esteem, which may create difficulty for patients in work and social situations.”

RESEARCH RESULTS
The participants in Dr. Kimball’s research viewed photos of several common skin conditions and completed a questionnaire regarding each condition. The majority of subjects (62.5 percent) indicated that they were upset by the images of acne, and more than 80 percent said they felt pity toward acne sufferers.

More than two-thirds of participants (67.9 percent) indicated that they would be ashamed if they had acne and that they would find someone with acne unattractive. Moreover, 41.1 percent of participants said they would be uncomfortable being seen in public with someone with acne, and 44.6 percent said they would feel uncomfortable touching someone with acne.

“I was surprised by these results,” Dr. Kimball says. “Since so many people have experienced acne, I thought they would have more empathy for patients with this condition.”
Many participants expressed belief in common misconceptions about acne, including that the condition is caused by poor hygiene (55.4 percent), that it is infectious (50.0 percent) and that it is related to diet (37.5 percent). “Clearly there are a lot of misconceptions out there,” Dr. Kimball says. “People are making incorrect assumptions about acne, and it’s affecting their opinion of patients with this condition.”

**RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS**

According to Dr. Kimball, misconceptions about acne also may affect patients’ efforts to manage their condition. “If you think acne is related to hygiene, you may start scrubbing your face aggressively in an effort to cleanse your skin, and this may make the condition worse,” she says. “Or, if you think acne is related to what you eat, you may decide to cut certain foods out of your diet, but there is little scientific evidence to support many of those strategies.”

Dr. Kimball says she’d like to conduct further research into the perspectives of acne patients, investigating how common misconceptions and outside opinions about their condition affect them. In the meantime, she advises patients who are struggling with acne to visit a board-certified dermatologist, who can devise an appropriate treatment plan.

“If acne is having a negative impact on your life, you don’t have to deal with it yourself,” she says. “Acne is a medical condition, so you shouldn’t hesitate to seek medical attention for it. There are a variety of effective treatment options available, for both teens and adults, and a dermatologist can determine the best option for you.”

**AMERICAN ACADEMY OF DERMATOLOGY EXPERT ADVICE**

“Acne is a very common condition, but it seems that many people don’t have a good understanding of it,” Dr. Kimball says. “The widespread misconceptions about acne may contribute to negative perceptions, which can affect patients’ quality of life and social interactions. Rather than attempting to manage the condition themselves based on those misconceptions, I encourage acne patients to visit a board-certified dermatologist, who can provide the best possible treatment.”

**MORE INFORMATION**

Stigmatization of Acne
American Academy of Dermatology issues new guidelines of care for acne treatment
Acne

###

Jennifer Allyn  
(847) 240-1730  
jallyn@aad.org

Nicole DiVito  
(847) 240-1746  
ndivito@aad.org

Amanda Jacobs  
(847) 240-1714  
ajacobs@aad.org

Kara Jilek  
(847) 240-1701  
kjilek@aad.org

Headquartered in Schaumburg, Ill., the American Academy of Dermatology, founded in 1938, is the largest, most influential, and most representative of all dermatologic associations. With a membership of more than 18,000 physicians worldwide, the AAD is committed to advancing the diagnosis and medical, surgical and cosmetic treatment of the skin, hair and nails; advocating high standards in clinical practice, education and research in dermatology; and supporting and enhancing patient care for a lifetime of healthier skin, hair and nails. For more information, contact the AAD at 1-888-462-DERM (3376) or www.aad.org. Follow the Academy on Facebook (American Academy of Dermatology), Twitter (@AADskin) or YouTube (AcademyofDermatology).