



ACNE, ROSACEA, AND RELATED DISORDERS (INCLUDING HIDRADENITIS SUPPURATIVA)

## IMPACT OF HS ON PATIENTS' EMOTION

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**Introduction:** Chronic pain, itching and unpleasant smell are the factors that mostly impair the quality of life of patients affected by hidradenitis suppurativa (HS). Obesity, metabolic syndrome and cardiovascular comorbidities further worsen the patients' psychological state. In the recent years many studies highlighted the numerous psychiatric co-morbidities associated to HS and the impact of HS on patients' emotions. These psychological and psychiatric disorders comprise anxiety, depression, bipolar disorder, sleep disorders, stigmatization, food addiction, smoking and substance abuse. HS is associated with significant physical, psychological, social and economic burden, the cumulative effect of which may result in failure to achieve 'full life potential' in some patients, termed 'cumulative life course impairment'.

**Objective:** To better understand the needs and psychological burden of patients with HS in order to adequately take care of them and to increase their therapeutical compliance.

**Materials and Methods:** We interviewed patients with HS recruited from the outpatient clinic at the Department of Dermatology, San Martino Polyclinic Hospital, in Genoa, Italy. The interviews were open and explorative, based on narrative medicine, with the goal to take the patients' medical history but also to listen to story of their life. Seven main themes were addressed, namely: emotions and self-esteem, taboo and stigmatization, intimacy and personal relationships, cognition, communication, dressing limitations and economical and work aspects.

**Results:** Shame and frustration were the most frequently reported emotions, along with low self-esteem and isolation. Delayed diagnosis caused frustration and disappointment in patients. The awareness of a chronic but precisely codified disease, that can be controlled by drugs and life-style corrections, improved the patients' emotional state and empowered them.

**Conclusions:** A dedicated unit to HS where dermatologists are trained in counseling and narrative medicine is helpful due to the difficult approach to these patients who are exhausted by their disease.

