

newsroom

Patients Avoid Treatment Despite Knowing the Seriousness of Their Condition

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There are some surprising results from a recent, national survey of rosacea patients conducted by the Rosacea Awareness Program (RAP). The web-based research of 696 rosacea sufferers in August 2003 revealed that despite knowing that rosacea can produce serious physical consequences on one of the most visible parts of the body the face almost 40 per cent of sufferers fail to seek treatment. And of the many reasons given as to why, nearly 50 per cent of sufferers are afraid that their doctor won't take them seriously.

The release of the RAP research has been timed for March, which has been designated as Rosacea Awareness Month across North America. Another poll, conducted at the same time by Decima teleVox confirmed that it is quite prevalent - approximately 1.5 million Canadians are affected.

According to Carol Levine, Director of the Rosacea Awareness Program, the purpose of the research was to gain a better understanding of the needs and concerns of individuals suffering from this disease. On average dermatologists see 11 to 20 rosacea patients each week, so the condition is quite common. Often individuals feel so self-conscious by the redness that they avoid going out with friends and even miss work. Because they are also sensitive to the fact that rosacea isn't life-threatening compared to other diseases, sufferers are embarrassed to complain, chalking it up to pure vanity.

Rosacea is a chronic, progressive and potentially serious disorder characterized by redness to the cheeks, nose, chin and forehead. Patients report that their faces feel red, tight and burning, especially when exacerbated by environmental and lifestyle triggers like sudden temperature changes, stress, red wine, spicy food, hot beverages or exercise the normal pleasures of daily living.

Rosacea isn't a simple complexion problem that will go away on its own, says Dr. Ari Demirjian, Md, FRCPC, Associate Professor of Dermatology and Laser Surgery, McGill University Health Center. Rosacea can cause permanent skin changes and in some cases may require laser surgery. One of the most well-known rosacea sufferers was the late comedian W.C. Fields. His red, bulbous nose was an advanced stage of rosacea in men called rhinophyma.

Another significant research finding revealed gender differences. Men were substantially more affected than women when questioned on the impact of rosacea in their lives. More than half of the male respondents said rosacea affected their social life. More than 20 per cent felt it affected their career advancement, while 11 per cent missed an average of nine days of work per year.

No cure, but treatment is available

The jury is out on what causes rosacea. Various theories have suggested that rosacea is caused by bacteria, mites, a fungus, a malfunction of the connective tissue under the skin, or psychological factors, but none of these have been proven. The National Rosacea Society in the United States funds a National Grants Program that, among other things, supports continuing research in identifying the underlying cause of rosacea. Current treatment consists of oral and topical antibiotics, combined with an effective cleansing and moisturizing skin care regimen as well as lifestyle changes to minimize the flare-ups.

In most cases doctors prescribe a topical antibiotic gel or cream combined with an oral antibiotic, such as Tetracycline, as initial treatment. This is followed-up by long-term therapy with a topical antibiotic gel or cream alone to prevent a

recurrence. The most commonly prescribed topical rosacea therapy is metronidazole gel or cream. It has been proven to be effective in controlling the redness and pimples, as well as in reducing the dryness, stinging, burning and itching sometimes associated with this condition, says Dr. Demirjian.

Early detection may halt progression of the disease and in some cases, may reverse its effects. Dr. Demirjian recommends that individuals who suspect they have rosacea to see their dermatologist or family physician for diagnosis and treatment. I was surprised to read that patients are reluctant to approach their doctor. I would encourage them to try and identify the various triggers that might cause the condition to flare-up and to be candid in explaining how they feel both physically and emotionally.

About the Rosacea Awareness Program

The Rosacea Awareness Program (RAP), winner of the 2001 and the 2002 Canadian Dermatology Association's Public Education Award, is a community-based public awareness program established in 1995 to provide easy access to accurate information on rosacea and to assist in the proper diagnosis, treatment and overall management of the condition. The educational resources and activities are geared to patients, families and health care professionals.

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