Psoriasis Tied to Increased Risk of Psychiatric Disorders in Kids

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MIAMI – Children with psoriasis have a significantly greater risk of developing a psychiatric disorder than do those without psoriasis, according to findings from a large, retrospective, case-control study.

Nationally representative health plan data for 7,404 children with psoriasis aged younger than 18 years found that 5.1% were diagnosed with or treated for a psychiatric disorder after health plan enrollment, compared with 4.1% of 37,020 controls. Psoriasis patients were particularly more likely to be diagnosed with depression (3%) or anxiety (1.8%), compared with controls (2.4% and 1.4%, respectively), Carol Bao, Ph.D., reported during a poster discussion session at the meeting.

For children with psoriasis, the estimated hazard ratio for developing any psychiatric disorder was 1.23, for developing depression was 1.23, and for developing anxiety was 1.32, said Dr. Bao, a senior manager at Abbott Laboratories, Chicago.

The investigators also looked at prescriptions for psychotropic medications in assessing risk for development of psychiatric disorders. Prescriptions can be a mark-er for a diagnosis in cases where the prescribing physi-cian may be hesitant to refer the patient or make a di-gnosis, Dr. Bao explained, noting that this helped correct for possible underestimation of the develop-ment of psychiatric disorders and provided a risk esti-mate range.

When both diagnoses and prescriptions were con-sidered, psoriasis patients had 25% to 47% greater risk of developing a psychiatric disorder, 23% to 62% greater risk of developing depression, and 32% to 250% greater risk of developing anxiety, compared with controls, she said.

Patients included in the study had a mean age of 11.4 years. They were selected from a database of health plan participants who were enrolled in a plan at least 6 months before and after the first psoriasis diagnosis date (the index date), and who were followed from the index date until they were first diagnosed with any psy-chiatric disorder or were prescribed a drug used for the treatment of a psychiatric disorder. Any plan participant with a preexisting psychiatric diagnosis or pres cription was excluded. Controls were matched to patients based on age, sex, and index date.

The findings of an increased risk of developing psy-chiatric disorders in case patients remained significant after controlling for age, sex, health plan, region of res-idence, and comorbidities, Dr. Bao noted.

The study is limited by the potential for coding and reporting errors in the data used and by lack of infor-mation on the severity of the psychiatric disorders. However, the findings do suggest that the psychiatric impact of psoriasis on children must be addressed be-cause of the potential for both short- and long-term ad-verse effects.

“If we put these data in perspective, the development of psychiatric disorders at a young age can have a great impact in future adult life,” she said.