

Psoriasis Costs Americans Up to \$135 Billion Annually, Study Finds

Much of the expense is for indirect effects, such as time lost from work, experts say



WEDNESDAY, Jan. 7, 2015 (HealthDay News) -- Psoriasis is more than just a troublesome skin condition for millions of Americans -- it also causes up to \$135 billion a year in direct and indirect costs, a new study shows.

According to data included in the study, about 3.2 percent of the U.S. population has the chronic inflammatory skin condition.

"Psoriasis patients may endure skin and joint disease, as well as associated conditions such as heart disease and depression," said Dr. Amit Garg, a dermatologist at North Shore-LIJ Health System in Manhasset, N.Y.

"These patients may bear significant long-term costs related to the medical condition itself, loss of work productivity, as well as to intangibles such as restriction in activities and poor self-image, for example," he added.

In the new study, a team led by Dr. Elizabeth Brezinski of the University of California, Davis reviewed 22 studies to estimate the total annual cost of psoriasis to Americans.

They calculated health care and other costs associated with the skin condition at between \$112 billion and \$135 billion in 2013.

Direct costs of psoriasis ranged from \$57 billion to more than \$63 billion, and indirect costs -- such as missed work days -- ranged from about \$24 billion to \$35 billion, the study found.

Other health problems related to psoriasis cost more than \$36 billion, and treating the physical and mental health effects of psoriasis cost up to \$11,498 per patient, the research team calculated.

"The direct health care costs are significantly greater for patients with psoriasis than for the general population and are also higher for patients with increasing psoriasis disease severity," the researchers concluded.

Dr. Gary Goldenberg, assistant professor of dermatology at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai in New York City, said the findings were "not surprising."

He said psoriasis is often connected to a host of other health problems, and medical and other bills can rise quickly.

However, "the good news is that there are many new medications, oral and injectable, available for our patients," Goldenberg said. "It's important that our patients continue to have access to these medicines to improve their lives. "

The study was published online Jan. 7 in the journal *JAMA Dermatology*.