

## British Skin Foundation

### PRESS RELEASE

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## One in seven people with skin disease suffer silently with ‘severe pain’

For immediate release

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A shocking one in seven people with a skin disease in the UK live with ‘high amounts of pain or constant pain that never stops,’ a new snapshot survey reveals.

The online survey, conducted by the skin cancer and skin disease research charity the British Skin Foundation (BSF), reveals a nation of sufferers who deal not just with issues of pain, but sleep deprivation and a wide range of social complications caused by their disease. A total of 353 people were asked a series of questions relating to their skin disease and the impact it had on their daily and social life. The results show that the effects of skin disease are far greater than most expect.

Just under a quarter (24.1%, 84 people) of replies revealed their skin disease had been severe enough for them to be hospitalised, of whom a third (32.9%) had spent upwards of a month in hospital wards. What’s more, just under half of replies (46.5%) stated their skin disease was a major cause of sleep loss, with a third (32.4%) of all participants saying that they lost on average between one and five hours of sleep a week.

The social ramifications unveiled in the survey were as wide ranging as they were damaging. Although the physical and medical effects of skin disease are fairly well documented, the psychosocial aspects are often neglected. Sadly, one in seven people (15.1%) they had a relationship end as a direct consequence of the implications and stress a skin disease can bring with it.

Unsurprisingly, as many skin diseases are highly visual and likely to provoke a response, personal confidence was the area most affected by skin disease. Common conditions such as eczema, psoriasis and even acne, can affect people on a long-term basis. When asked to rank their top three personal issues with skin disease, eight out of ten people (76.4%) said their self-confidence took the biggest hit when talking about their day-to-day lives. Sexual relations was voted the second biggest issue, with 43.3% of people feeling this area of their lives were impacted upon.

A further four out of ten people (40.0%) indicated their skin disease had a major impact on their children’s lives. Difficulties with self-management, including hospitalisation, time off work or even unemployment are all typical factors that can affect the parent-child relationship.

A staggering one in four respondents spent 12 hours or more a week caring for someone else with a skin disease. Even a common condition like psoriasis can be hugely debilitating, with cracked and peeling skin and repeat infections a major issue in more severe cases. Applying corticosteroid creams and emollients, hospital visits as well as possible UV treatment all take their toll in terms of time and money.

The British Skin Foundation's Chief Executive, Matthew Patey, is determined to open the public's eyes to the current situation with skin disease: He says: "It's long overdue that skin disease got the recognition it deserves. Over the last five years, about 3800 people have died annually from a skin disease in England and Wales alone, and unless something is done, this figure is set to repeat itself in 2011 and beyond.

"Skin disease can totally dictate a person's life, as well as the lives of those around them. The survey we've run online can offer only a tiny glimpse at what people with skin disease go through on a daily basis. If anything it is a potent reminder that the effects are not limited to the symptomatic issues alone, but will play a role in their social and sexual spheres as well."

#### **Key findings from the snapshot survey:**

##### **Pain caused by their skin disease**

- High amounts of pain that is 'enough to stop you doing what you want': 12.3% (42 people)
- Medium amounts of pain - but still tolerable: 19% (65 people)
- Constant pain that never stops: 2.3% (8 people)

##### **Sleep Loss**

- 20.9% (71 people) of responses said they lose up to two hours a week.
- Lose up to three to five hours a week of sleep: 11.5% (39)
- Lose over five hours a week of sleep: 8.5% (29)
- 5.6% (19 people) of people said they barely sleep because of their skin condition.

##### **Relationships and social aspects**

When asked to rank their top three personal issues with skin disease:

- 76.4% said self confidence was biggest issue
- 43.3% said sexual relations was second biggest issue
- 56.7% said making new friendships was third biggest issue
- 15.1% said they had a relationship terminate because of their disease

**-Ends-**

**For more information about the survey contact: Bevis Man, Press Officer at the British Skin Foundation. Phone: 0207 391 6347, email: [bevis@bad.org.uk](mailto:bevis@bad.org.uk), Website: [www.britishskinfoundation.org.uk](http://www.britishskinfoundation.org.uk)**

The British Skin Foundation (BSF) is a charity committed to raising funds for skin cancer and skin disease research. Working closely with the British Association of Dermatologists (BAD) the BSF is the only charity dedicated to supporting dermatologists and skin science.

Over the last four years, the BSF has awarded in excess of £2.9 million to a number of studies that aim to find new treatments and eventually cures for the many skin diseases in the UK.