

Women Twice As Likely As Men To Seek Treatment For Hyperhidrosis

Whether it's sweaty palms causing embarrassment when shaking hands on a job interview or unsightly underarm stains that could make anyone think twice about wearing a white shirt, the **excessive sweating** disorder known as hyperhidrosis can impact all facets of a person's personal and professional life. Although the prevalence of this chronic medical condition is the same for men and women, a new study examining hyperhidrosis patients finds that women sought treatment much more frequently than men.

Speaking today at the 65th Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Dermatology, dermatologist Dee Anna Glaser, MD, FAAD, professor and vice chairman of dermatology at Saint Louis University School of Medicine in St. Louis, Mo., discussed how a patient's age, gender and the site of the excessive sweating affected diagnosis and treatment.

Hyperhidrosis is categorized as either primary hyperhidrosis (no known cause) or secondary hyperhidrosis (known cause) and can be limited to certain areas of the body or throughout the body. Primary hyperhidrosis affects nearly 3 percent of the U.S. population, or an estimated 7.8 million people, and most commonly affects the palms, soles, underarms, face and scalp. Secondary hyperhidrosis is due to an underlying condition, such as an infection, a medical disorder, **anxiety** or certain medications.

"While there have been a number of studies focusing on the treatment of hyperhidrosis, few studies have described the patient population impacted by this condition," explained Dr. Glaser. "Our study set out to identify common trends and associations of patients with primary hyperhidrosis in order to better understand the patients affected by this common condition."

Dr. Glaser and a team of researchers examined the medical records of 515 patients evaluated and treated for hyperhidrosis at their university-based dermatology practice. Of the total number of patients who sought treatment for hyperhidrosis, more than two-thirds (67.2 percent) were female and one-third (32.8 percent) were male. Interestingly, men were significantly more likely to seek treatment for facial hyperhidrosis, while women were much more likely to seek treatment for hyperhidrosis limited to the underarm area. The average age of the onset of hyperhidrosis for patients was 14.

When patients were asked to rate their condition on the Hyperhidrosis Disease Severity Scale which rates sweating from 1 (mild) to 4 (severe) Dr. Glaser reported that an overwhelming majority of patients rated their condition a 4, describing it as intolerable and always interfering with their daily activities. In addition, patients reported that **stress**, anxiety, heat and exercise were the most common aggravating factors.

The study also found that the patient's family history, age and site of hyperhidrosis affected diagnosis. "We have known for some time that a genetic component may contribute to primary hyperhidrosis, as 30 percent to 65 percent of patients have a family history of the condition," said Dr. Glaser. "Our study showed that patients who reported the onset of hyperhidrosis prior to age 20 were more likely to have a family history of the condition."

While hyperhidrosis commonly first occurs during puberty or early adolescence, some of the study patients developed hyperhidrosis at a much younger age than other patients. For example, 55 percent of patients affected by hyperhidrosis on the palms of their hands or the soles of their feet developed the condition before age 11. However, the vast majority of patients with hyperhidrosis of the underarm area were more likely to develop their first symptoms after puberty 68 percent developed the condition between the ages of 12 and 19.

"If left untreated, hyperhidrosis can really inhibit the way people live their lives," added Dr. Glaser. "Fortunately, dermatologists now have a number of newer therapies, as well as tried-and-true treatments, available to help patients with hyperhidrosis. Patients should consult their dermatologist if they experience unusual amounts of sweating over a prolonged period of time or perspiration that is not triggered by obvious factors. As this study suggests, not all hyperhidrosis patients are affected equally by this condition, and we're hopeful that future treatments will address the differences we found between genders and age groups."

Headquartered in Schaumburg, Ill., the American Academy of Dermatology (Academy), founded in 1938, is the largest, most influential, and most representative of all dermatologic associations. With a membership of more than 15,000 physicians worldwide, the Academy is committed to: advancing the diagnosis and medical, surgical and cosmetic treatment of the skin, hair and nails; advocating high standards in clinical practice, education, and research in dermatology; and supporting and enhancing patient care for a lifetime of healthier skin, hair and nails. For more information, contact the Academy at 1-888-462-DERM (3376) or <http://www.aad.org>.

Medical News Today, Feb, 2007