

Leading the News

Severe Acne Associated With Suicide Risk.

The UK's [Guardian](#) (11/12, Boseley) reports that, according to a [study](#) published Nov. 11 in the British Medical Journal, "young people with severe acne should be carefully monitored as the condition can make them suicidal, and in some cases, that may be worsened by their" medications, in particular by isotretinoin (Accutane). "Researchers at Sweden's Karolinska Institute found the risk of suicide rose in the year before the patient was given the" medicine however, which they suggested is "clear evidence...that severe acne itself is a risk for suicide."

The UK's [Press Association](#) (11/12) reports that in the study of 5,700 people, 128 of which were hospitalized after attempting to commit suicide, investigators found that "in the six months after treatment with the drug, the risk of suicide was higher than that before treatment." Notably, "38% of 32 patients who made their first suicide attempt before treatment made a new attempt or committed suicide thereafter," and "71% of the 14 who made their first suicide attempt within six months after treatment stopped made a new attempt or committed suicide."

However, according to the UK's [Telegraph](#) (11/12, Adams), "within three years of treatment ending the attempted suicide rate among patients had dropped to the average population level," the investigators "noted, suggesting the drug could actually save lives overall."

The author of an accompanying [editorial](#) pointed out that "acne so severe that it is treated with Accutane is not a trivial disease," [HealthDay](#) (11/11, Reinberg) reported. In fact, "it is a disease associated with significant psychiatric morbidity," the editorialist noted. While he said it was not possible to determine whether isotretinoin or severe acne was responsible for the increase in attempted suicide, he agreed with the study authors that "physicians must monitor patients taking Accutane for evidence of psychiatric problems." [Reuters](#) (11/12, Kelland) also covers the story.