

Adverse effects of isotretinoin: A retrospective review of 1743 patients started on isotretinoin.

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Abstract

Isotretinoin has revolutionized the management of Background/Objectives: acne vulgaris. However, concerns continue regarding the adverse effect profile of isotretinoin. This study aims to review the adverse effects experienced by patients started on isotretinoin by a single dermatologist. Methods: Retrospective chart review of 1743 patients started on isotretinoin for various dermatological conditions over a 6-year period. Details of the dose of isotretinoin used, concomitant medications, adverse effects and outcome were recorded. Results: during the study period. One-fifth (18.5%) of patients reported no adverse effects. Cheilitis was the most commonly reported adverse effect, affecting 78% of users, followed by eczema and tiredness, seen in 12% each. However, these were clearly dose-dependent, as the group treated with mg/kg/day only reported cheilitis in 47%, eczema in 7% and tiredness in 5%, compared with 96%, 16% and 18%, respectively, mg/gm/day. Twenty-four patients (1.4%) in those treated with more than 0.75 stopped isotretinoin because of adverse effects; a further three patients complained of severe adverse effects on at least one occasion, but continued taking the medication. The adverse effect(s) that led to patients stopping isotretinoin were cheilitis (22 patients), mood change (13), tiredness (12), eczema (6) and pregnancy (2). There were no reported instances of suicidal ideation or attempted suicide. Conclusions: Other than the two oral contraceptive failures, there were no serious adverse events recorded during this review period. Isotretinoin is a very effective medication with a low adverse-effect profile when used at lower doses.