Visual disfigurement and depression.

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Abstract

Approximately 10% of the population has a facial disfigurement, such as a scar, blemish, or deformity that severely affects the ability to lead a normal life, and 2 to 3% have a clearly visible blemish. They may experience depressive symptoms due to disfigurement, stressful life events, or other causes. Depression is a painful and costly disorder that is often unrecognized and untreated in specialty practices; it is linked with higher costs of care, lengths of stay, and rates of rehospitalization. Often, these individuals seek plastic surgery to repair the disfigurement, and depressive symptoms are not uncommon preoperatively, perioperatively, and postoperatively. In addition, depressive disorders exist among 20 to 32% of people with a medical disease. Major depression is a recurring and disabling illness that typically responds to treatment with psychotherapy, antidepressants, and social support. Nurses have a major role to play in screening for and detecting depression so it can be evaluated and referred for treatment. Nurses also provide education, psychosocial support, and advocacy for patients with depression. Identifying those with depressed symptoms allows the nurse to recommend treatment, offer referrals, and provide supportive interventions.

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