

Comment on “Association of alopecia areata with hospitalization for mental health disorders in US adults”



To the Editor: I read with great interest the article on the association between alopecia areata (AA) and mental health disorders by Singam et al.¹ Among several conditions evaluated in their study, schizophrenia, attention-deficit disorder, and conduct disorders were positively associated with AA, different from findings of a previous report.² I have 2 comments regarding the disagreement between these 2 studies.

Chu et al² conducted a case–control (1:4) study and found that patients with AA had a higher risk of anxiety and any psychiatric disease. In contrast, patients with AA had a lower risk of schizophrenia (odds ratio 0.54, 95% confidence interval 0.37-0.78). Also, the risk of attention-deficit disorder and personality disorder were not reduced in patients with AA.² I speculate that the severity of disorders contributes to the association because Singam et al¹ reported some discrepancies with the association by selecting primary or secondary diagnosis or primary hospitalization as independent variables. Although the authors handled a great number of samples, the characteristics of each variable would influence the association.

Second, the authors compared all patients with AA; comparing by AA subtype was not considered for the analysis. This strategy was also used in the study by Chu et al.² In general, about 95% of AA patients are classified as patchy alopecia, and residuals are classified as alopecia totalis or

universalis. But caution should be paid to prognosis of each subtype of AA.³ In addition, they reported that patients with AA had a higher risk of mortality associated with self-harm and psychiatric diseases. Taken together, a causal association between AA and mental health disorders should be explored in further studies.

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