

skin | mystery skin condition

by Rob and Carol Trow

Morgellons is an unexplained skin condition that causes extreme suffering. It's stranger than fiction—the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention are on it. Physicians, research scientists and health officials admit to little or no understanding of the condition, its causes or treatment options.

To begin, note that many in the medical community are skeptical. They doubt that Morgellons even exists and believe that it may be purely a psychosomatic condition. Some physicians recommend that patients with symptoms of Morgellons see psychiatrists.

What is it?

Some of the symptoms of Morgellons are foreign fibers and filaments that protrude through the skin or just under the surface. These filaments can be white, blue, black or red. They can also appear to resemble grains of sand.

There is no proof these skin lesions are caused by biological agents, products the body is trying to rid itself of or a bodily malfunction. Tests on these filaments have been inconclusive but many point out that they are textile in nature or skin debris. Doctors at Oklahoma State University are convinced Morgellons is very real. Randy Wymore, M.D., says his analysis of the colored fibers found under the skin have no similarity to those found in clothing.

A second, common symptom is the sensation of extreme itching that makes the person feel as if their body is being infested with creepy crawly bugs. Skin lesions appear both spontaneously or are

caused by the individual as a result of severe scratching. Other symptoms include fatigue, body pain, sweat that is black in color and emotional problems.

Research underway

Michele Pearson, M.D., principal investigator for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, will undertake the first organized study of this condition with Joe Selby, M.D., of Kaiser Permanente. They both readily admit that the scientific

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community characterizes Morgellons as a medical mystery that has challenged everyone as there are no objective, proven points of reference in medical journals or history except those that are self reported. While the unusual symptoms have been objectively documented, how and why they appear is unknown. What is clear to all—the suffering of those afflicted is real.

While some believe Morgellons may be a chronic infectious disease others are not so sure. It is not known if it is a contagious condition but in some cases several family members have the condition. Psychiatrists point out that a delusional disorder can be passed to family and close associates. Others disagree.



Common laboratory tests point to a number of abnormalities in those suffering from Morgellons. There is also research that believes there is a link between Morgellons and Lyme Disease, but there is no pattern or common thread. The study recently launched by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention aims to undertake the first systematic surveillance of those suffering from Morgellons. Environmental, physical and psychological evaluations will be conducted on those suffering from these symptoms. To date, most self reported cases have come from California, Texas and Florida. ■

Rob and Carol Trow, his wife, own *DermaConcepts USA*, the eastern U.S. (excluding metro NYC) distributors for *Environ® Skin Care*. In the skin care field for more than ten years Rob has authored multiple articles for trade publications.