



**September 18<sup>th</sup> 2020, is the Vulvar Lichen sclerosus Awareness Day.**

I am Mario Preti, Gynecologist Oncologist at the University of Torino, Italy, Immediate Past President of the International Society for the Study of vulvovaginal Disease (ISSVD).

With our President Colleen Stockdale, the ISSVD Executive Council and the Vulvar Awareness Committee, we have chosen Lichen sclerosus (LS) as the topic of this year vulvar awareness. Starting from now our Society together with the most important gynecological, dermatological, pathological societies and patient associations, dedicate its efforts to spread knowledge on this dermatological disease that affects women of all ages and often goes unrecognized and underreported.

Although LS etiology is multifactorial, evidence suggests that LS is an autoimmune disorder with a genetic component and local background.

Even if LS is classified among vulvar dermatoses, which are non-neoplastic and non-infectious in nature, the literature shows evidence that LS has a potential to transform into a vulvar intraepithelial neoplasia and vulvar carcinoma, so this dermatological disease ideally links to the ISSVD 2019 Vulvar Awareness Day: vulvar cancer. The non-negligible (3 to 7%) risk of LS neoplastic transformation to squamous cell carcinoma underlines that LS requires a vigilant and lifelong follow-up in all patients, particularly in elderly women.

Early detection of pre-invasive lesions as differentiated vulvar intraepithelial neoplasia is necessary to reduce the risk of vulvar cancer, which may be achieved by careful screening in these women.

There is no total cure for LS, but the symptoms can be controlled extremely well by the use of strong steroid ointments. These can be quite safe to be used in the genital area for this condition and reduce the risk of malignant transformation.

**What is our final message for Lichen sclerosus awareness day, or better, for the LS awareness year?**

**For patients:** If you have symptoms in the vulvar region, refer them to your specialist (dermatologist/gynecologist)

**For specialists:** Consider diagnosing, treating and carefully following LS patients

**For LS Patient Associations:** Thank you for what you are doing and contact our Executive Director for any initiative

Thank you