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### ACCEPTED MANUSCRIPT

# **Comment and Controversy Edited by Stephen P. Stone, MD**

## Are actinic keratoses really squamous cell cancer? How do we know if they would become malignant?

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#### Abstract

Actinic Keratosis (AK) is a very common skin disease, caused by chronic sun exposure. AKs have historically been characterized as being "precancerous" or "premalignant." It is true that these lesions do not possess metastatic potential, because they are confined to the epidermis but it is not accurate to deem them "premalignant." AK qualifies as a malignant neoplasm because it also fulfills criteria for malignancy in classic pathology, namely, the capability, or potential, to kill by either destruction of tissue locally or by metastasis widely. In this context AK is considered now by many a carcinoma *in situ*, and can persist or progress to invasive squamous cell carcinoma (iSCC), which rarely metastasizes. Through this controversy, that certainly speaks to an issue we have been debating for at least a century, we'd like to start a really and constructive debate to reach a unanimous conclusion considering the various theories and the various points of view of the literature.

# Are actinic keratoses really squamous cell cancer? How do we know if they would become malignant?

We are going to write about a very debated subject: is the actinic keratosis a cancer or a precancerous lesion? The data in the literature are conflicting, we are trying to come to a conclusion.

Actinic Keratosis (AK) is a very common skin disease, caused by chronic sun exposure. Over 75% of AKs arise on chronically sun-exposed areas<sup>1</sup>, consequently

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