

The use of dietary supplements for skin diseases: results of a global study

Data from the All Skins-All Colors-All Dermatoses: the ALL PROJECT



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INTRODUCTION & OBJECTIVE

While a plethora of articles continue to be published on the role of nutritional agents, both in the lay press as well as in indexed journals, the data is not well-founded and leaves the dermatologist in a predicament and the patient confused. There are very few studies on the consumption of food supplements by patients themselves in the context of their skin disease.

MATERIAL & METHODS

The ALL PROJECT involves 50,552 individuals, representative of the adult populations of 20 countries spread over all five continents. In each of the 20 countries surveyed, we conducted a population-based study on representative and extrapolable samples of the general population aged 16 years or more. After identifying individuals with skin disease, we asked about the use of meditation for skin disease.

RESULTS

A total of 17,627 individuals claimed to have a skin condition diagnosed by a doctor, for a prevalence of 34.86%. Of these, once weighted by the demographic weight of each country: 47% admitted to having taken food supplements, at least once, because of their skin condition. At global level (weighted by the demographic weight of each country), there is no difference according to gender (men: 46.3% vs. women: 47.7%). On the other hand, the use of food supplements in the management of skin disease seems to be a generational issue: 52% of 16-39 years olds admit to having used them for their skin disease, compared with 44% of those aged 40 and over P<0.00001.

There are undoubtedly cultural differences between the major regions of the world. Asia, with a prevalence rate of over 50% and a population in excess of 2 billion, has the highest figures when the demographic weight of each country is taken into account (see figure).

For one patient in three (34%), the use of food supplements is motivated by the desire to prolong the effect of a medical treatment. For 37%, the use of food supplements is motivated by the desire to replace a medical treatment.

Finally, one out of two patients (51 %) hope to slow the progression of their skin disease by taking food supplements. We wanted to know if consulting a doctor for their skin disease had an influence on the use of food supplements. We observed a statistically significant difference, with 58.02% patients consulting a doctor claiming to use food supplements, as against 19.4%.

DISCUSSION

The patients with skin disease take the dietary supplements, with a higher prevalence among young people. This use is not at the expense of allopathic treatment and is more frequent among individuals who consult, which is consistent with the motivations expressed.

