



# Provider Evaluation and Patient Experience Among Patients with Genital Psoriasis



Pavane L. Gorrepati, BA<sup>1</sup>, Yahya Argobi, MD<sup>1</sup>, Maria Beatrice Alora, MD<sup>1</sup>, Gideon P. Smith, MD, PhD, MPH<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Dermatology, Massachusetts General Hospital of Harvard Medical School, 50 Staniford Street, Suite 200, Boston, Massachusetts 02114

## BACKGROUND

- Psoriasis involving the genital region occurs in two-thirds of patients with psoriasis and can severely affect patients' quality of life.<sup>1</sup> Genital psoriasis, however, is often overlooked by physicians, even though it can have a profound psychosocial impact for patients and their relationships.<sup>2</sup>
- We sought to examine the impact of genital psoriasis among psoriatic patients, their response to treatments, and how often genital psoriasis is evaluated by dermatologists.**

## METHODS

- A cross-sectional qualitative study was completed. Patients 18 years or older seen for psoriasis by one of the attending dermatologists or those receiving phototherapy from the Massachusetts General Hospital Outpatient Dermatologic Clinic were recruited. Fifty-five subjects were enrolled in the study and completed a 23-item questionnaire.



## RESULTS

- Only 23.6% of participants had ever been asked if they had a genital rash by a dermatologist. 60% of participants indicated a dermatologist had never examined the genital area.
- When asked if they currently had a rash in the genital areas, 29.1% of participants answered affirmatively. However, 43.6% of participants indicated they had had at some point some form of itching, burning, pain, or involvement in the genital areas. Of these, 45.8% indicated that their dermatologist did not ask/diagnose the genital rash.
- These patients ranked genital itching 4.61/10, pain 4.09/10, and stinging/burning 3.86/10. Of areas affected in females, 80% of participants indicated that they were self-conscious or experienced some form of embarrassment because of their skin psoriasis.
- 29.1% of participants described that their overall psoriasis has caused some form of sexual difficulty for them. 50% of participants with involvement in their genital area indicated experiencing some form of sexual difficulty. When looking at the gender breakdown of sexual difficulty, 62.5% of female patients indicated significant sexual difficulty compared to just 25% of male patients.

**Table 2: Additional Data Breakdown from Study Population**

| Question:   | Options:               | Breakdown:    |
|---|------------------------|---------------|
| <b>Genital Areas Affected in Female Patients</b>                | Labia Majora           | 62.5% (5/8)   |
|   | Labia Minora           | 50%           |
|   | Perineum               | 50%           |
| <b>Genital Areas Affected in Male Patients</b>                  | Penile Shaft           | 56.3% (9/16)  |
|   | Perineum               | 56.3%         |
|   | Scrotum                | 37.5%         |
| <b>How Itchy, Sore, Painful, or Stinging Was Skin Psoriasis</b> | Very much              | 27.3% (15/55) |
|   | A lot                  | 23.6%         |
|   | A little               | 38.2%         |
|   | Not at all             | 5.5%          |
|   | Left blank/no response | 5.5%          |

**Table 1:** Additional data collected from the 23-item questionnaire is shown in Table 1.

## CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- This qualitative study of patients with psoriasis adds to the growing body of knowledge regarding genital psoriasis. It shows that even though almost half of the patients enrolled in the study had a rash or some form of symptoms in their genital regions, a majority of patients had never had their genital area examined by a dermatologist for psoriasis nor had they ever been asked if they had a genital rash.
- For those patients with symptoms in the genital areas, there was mild to moderate discomfort experienced by patients in regards to pain, stinging, and itching in the genital regions.
- A majority of these patients, specifically female patients, experienced significant sexual difficulty due to their genital psoriasis.
- In the future, providers should regularly examine and ask patients with psoriasis about potential genital involvement. Given the significant sexual difficulty and embarrassment patients felt from their skin psoriasis, providers should also ask about the psycho-social burden patients may experience from their psoriasis.

## REFERENCES

- Kelly, A., & Ryan, C. (2019). Genital Psoriasis: Impact on Quality of Life and Treatment Options. *American Journal of Clinical Dermatology*, 20(5), 639-646. doi:10.1007/s40257-019-00447-5
- Ryan C, Sadlier M, Vol ED, et al. Genital psoriasis is associated with significant impairment in quality of life and sexual functioning. *Journal of the American Academy of Dermatology*. 2015;72(6):978-983. doi:10.1016/j.jaad.2015.02.1127