



## Costs incurred by patients with acne prior to dermatological consultation

**Background:** Acne Vulgaris can have a significant financial impact on patients. Prior to consulting a dermatologist, patients with acne will often try multiple over-the-counter (OTC) products for acne prevention, treatment, and cover-up. We aimed to determine the total financial costs incurred by patients self-managing their acne; and whether this expenditure was associated with patients' financial income.

**Methods:** Over a 4-month period in 2019, consecutive new patients referred to a private dermatology clinic with acne were asked to complete a questionnaire. This questionnaire asked about household income, acne severity, impact on quality of life, acne-related costs, and reasons for delay in seeking or obtaining a dermatological consultation. Included patients were aged 16 + .

**Results:** 46/49 patients who met inclusion criteria completed the questionnaire. OTC products were responsible for the greatest expenditure, in both females (84% of spending) and males (68%). Patients spent \$850 (average) on acne management in the preceding 6 months. There was no significant difference in spending per income bracket ( $p = 0.51$ ). There was a positive relationship between spending and impact of acne on quality of life ( $p = 0.02$ ). 40% of patients delayed seeking a dermatology consultation. More than 70% of these patients attributed this delay to cost.

**Conclusion:** Acne has a significant financial impact on patients, irrespective of household income. While the cost of a dermatology consultation is often cited as a barrier to treatment, it is likely that seeking a consultation earlier could save patients from unnecessary acne-management costs.

