



AWARENESS ABOUT THE USE OF NATUROPATHIC TREATMENT FOR SKIN INFECTIONS - A CROSS SECTIONAL SURVEY

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Abstract:

Aim: The aim of the study is to create awareness about the use of naturopathic treatment for skin infections.

Back Ground: Skin diseases or infections account for 10 to 20% of all consultations in a general practice. Dermatitis, eczema. Psoriasis, skin allergies, rashes, acne, etc are the most common skin complaints. Anti-histamines, analgesics and anti-inflammatory drugs are the most widely prescribed drugs for these infections. But nowadays due to increasing awareness, a large part of the population affected by these skin infections goes in for natural treatments like Ayurveda, Siddha or herbal medicines.

Method: Cross sectional study was conducted with about 20 questions. Informed consent was obtained from the participants of the survey.

Significance: To assess the awareness about the use of naturopathic treatments among the general population and gauge their attitudes towards the same for skin ailments

Key Words: Skin Infections, Herbal, Naturopathy, Rashes, Questionnaire & Cross Sectional

Introduction:

Skin diseases are a very distressing form of illness for those affected by it^[1-3] This is not only because of the high level of discomfort associated with it, but also because of its high visibility. These infections can lead to sufferers becoming socially isolated.^[4] The limited results often obtained with conventional treatments mean that many patients turn to alternative treatment modalities. Herbal remedies have existed for centuries and have been used for treating various illnesses. Recent research supports the use of herbs for the treatment of various medical problems.^[5,6] Herbal therapies and treatments are slowly gaining popularity. Herbal remedies are available even for skin afflictions and can be used instead of conventional treatment.

Materials and Methods:

A cross sectional study was conducted among women ranging from 18 to 60 years of age. The survey assessed their awareness about the use of naturopathic remedies for skin infections. Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the research ethical committee, Saveetha Dental College & Hospitals, Chennai.

Data Collection:

The questionnaire was given to women in the age group of 18 to 60 years of age. The questionnaire had 20 questions. It basically aimed at assessing their views regarding the use of naturopathic treatment for skin ailments.

Results:

The results obtained from the 100 people surveyed

- ✓ 88% said they suffered from skin allergies while the other 22% said they did not get skin allergies.
- ✓ 67% said they would take efforts to treat their skin allergies while the other 33% said they would not do anything to treat their allergies.
- ✓ Only 10% said they would visit a dermatologist for consultation while the other 90% would self medicate.
- ✓ 20% said they have suffered from adverse reactions due to dermatologist prescribed treatment while 80% had no complaints.
- ✓ Almost 70% of the surveyed people had used natural treatment while 30% had never used natural remedies.
- ✓ 64% of the surveyed people had never experienced any adverse effects from using herbal treatments whereas 36% said they had suffered from various adverse effects.
- ✓ Of the 100 people surveyed almost 54% would opt for herbal treatments when compared to around 46 % saying they were more comfortable with conventional treatments for their skin ailments.

Results:

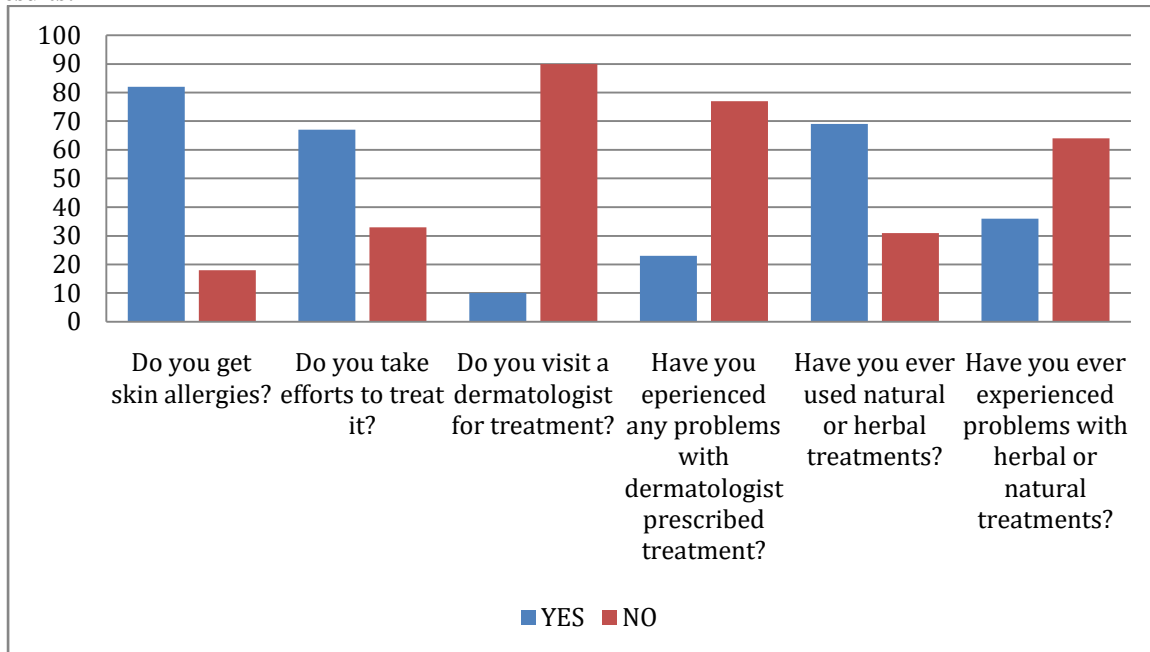


Figure 1: Response for the Naturopathic treatment for skin infections

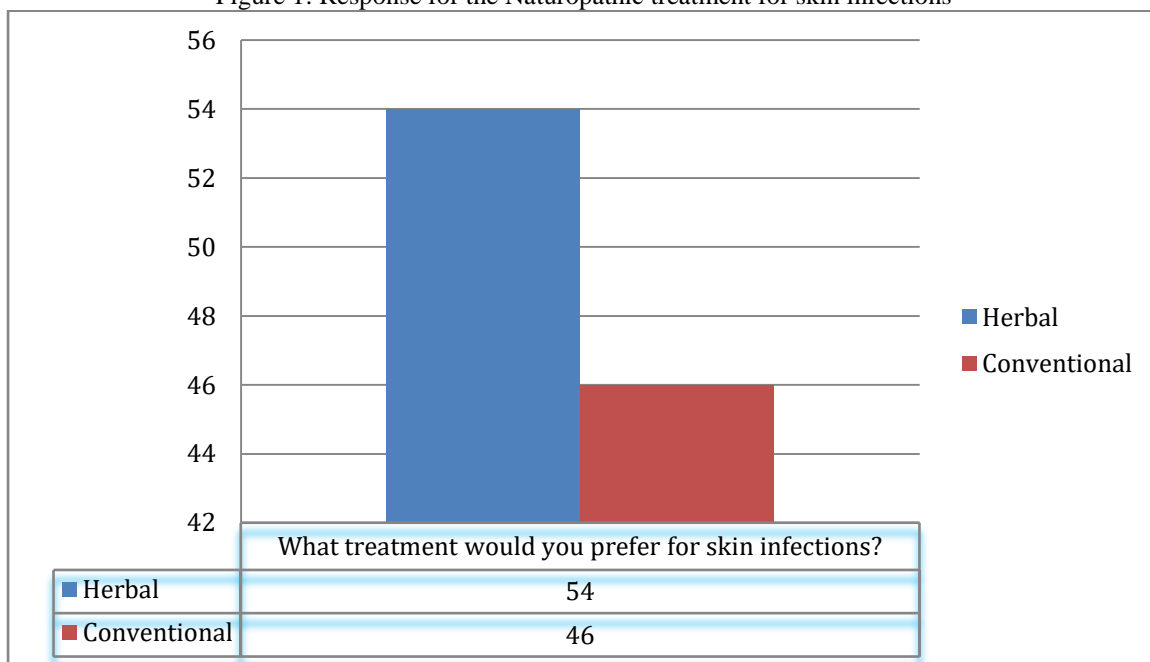


Figure 2: Herbal v/s conventional treatment

Discussion:

Human skin is the largest organ in the body. It contains many specialized cells and structures. It is made up of three layers namely – epidermis, dermis and hypodermis. Each layer has a specific role in the overall function of the skin.^[7] The skin guards the underlying muscles, bones, ligaments and internal organs. The skin also forms the body’s first line of defense against any infection. It plays an important role in protecting the body against pathogens^[8] and excessive water loss^[9]. Skin has other functions like insulation, temperature regulation, sensation, storage, absorption of oxygen and drugs^[10] and water resistance^[11]. There are two general types of skin – hairy and glabrous skin^[12] The skin may also be dry, pale or sensitive. This differs from individual to individual. Skin disease is a common ailment and affects all ages from the neonate to the elderly. This may cause harm in a number of ways^[13]. There are more than a thousand conditions that affect the skin but most skin diseases are characterized into nine common types - Rashes, Viral infections, Bacterial Infections, Fungal Infections, Parasitic Infections, Pigmentation Disorders, Tumours and cancers, Trauma and Other Conditions.^[14] Some of the conventional treatments for skin diseases are topical medications like antibacterials anthralin, antifungal agents, Benzoyl peroxide, coal tar, retinoids and salicylic acids^[15]. Oral treatments for skin

conditions include antibiotics, antifungal agents, antiviral agents, immunosuppressants and corticosteroids^[16]. Naturopathic treatments are slowly and steadily gaining popularity as opposed to conventional medications as they have fewer side effects, they are less expensive and are also well tolerated. Besides they also sometimes provide relief from certain ailments that cannot be resolved with conventional drugs. Herbal treatments can also be used over a long time period with no apparent harmful effects. As of now a number of plants are being used in the treatment of skin ailments. Some of them are mentioned below - *Allium cepa* (Common name : Onion), *Allium sativum* (Common name : Garlic), *Aloe vera* (Common name : Barbados aloe), *Azadirachta indica* (Common name : Neem), *Beta vulgaris* (Common name : Beetroot), *Camellia sinesis* (Common name : Green tea), *Crocus sativus* (Common name : Saffron), *Curcuma longus* (Common name : Turmeric), *Daucus carota* (Common name : Carrot), *Lavendula officinalis* (Common name : Lavender), *Lycopersicon esculentum* (Common name : Tomato), *Mangifera indica* (Common name : Mango) and *Thyme vulgaris* (Common name : Thyme).^[17] Naturopathic treatments have a great scope for curing different types of skin ailments. A recent study found that almost 60% of world's population uses alternative medicines.^[9] So although there is a certain amount of uncertainty about the safety and effectiveness among a small part of the population, a majority of the population seems to accept that the use of herbal medications is safe as well as cost effective.

Conclusion:

This study found that there is an increased awareness and knowledge among the general population about alternative methods of treatment. Though people seem to be more comfortable with using conventional treatments, the trends are slowly changing with the increased amount of research being done in such fields. The only major issue that most of the population had was about the safety and effectiveness of such treatments. So to bring about a change in mentality of the population, more trials and studies should be conducted and publicized. This will definitely change the mindset of the population at large and will aid in removing any doubts that they might harbor about naturopathic treatments.

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