Journal of Pharmacy and Pharmacology 12 (2025) 5-9
doi: 10.17265/2328-2150/2025.01.002

Research on the Behavior and Needs of Acne Patients Towards Dermo Cosmetic

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Abstract: Acne vulgaris ranks second among dermatological pathologies, and despite various treatment approaches, its management remains a complex and prolonged process [1, 2]. The psycho-emotional state accompanying acne, both during puberty and later, often pushes patients towards self-treatment [5, 6]. In cases of mild and moderate forms of acne, there is an observed increase in patient self-referrals to pharmacies, where numerous acne treatment dermatological cosmetic products are available and the disease is often managed by pharmacists [7, 8]. It is important for community pharmacies to understand the behavior, needs and attitudes of acne patients for improving pharmaceutical services. **Aim:** The aim of the study was to investigate the needs and behavior of of Acne patients towards dermatological cosmetic products in Georgia and to determine brand awareness. **Method:** A structured electronic questionnaire was placed in a targeted closed group on social networks ("Acne", "Skin Health"). The limitation of the study was that respondents must have experienced acne at least once in their lifetime. **Key Findings and Conclusions:** 200 respondents participated in the study. More than half of the respondents suffer from acne from puberty to adulthood. The majority of respondents (67.5%) spend more than 6 months on treatment and use at least two skincare products daily. In cases of moderate or severe acne, only half of the patients consulted a specialist doctor, while the rest relied on self-diagnosis and consulted a pharmacist. For them, both the doctor's and the pharmacist's consultations were equally important, and when selecting a product, they prioritized ingredients, brand, safety, manufacturing country, and preferred gel and cream forms. Among the acne treatment cosmetic brands available on the Georgian market, the most favored by respondents were SVR, La Roche-Posay, and Bioderma. The majority of respondents continue to actively follow the appearance of new acne treatment products on the market.

Key words: Community pharmacy, acne, acne dermatological cosmetic products, behavior and needs of acne patients, acne treatment cosmetic products.

1. Introduction

Acne represents a global problem, and its prevalence is increasing in almost every country [1]. Among dermatological pathologies, acne ranks second, affecting 9.4% of the world's population, with teenagers being the most vulnerable group (85%). However, acne can also manifest between the ages of 30 and 40 [2, 3]. Despite various treatment approaches, disease management remains a complex and prolonged process for patients due to the complexity of the condition and its dependence on many factors, such as hormonal imbalances, metabolic disorders, diet, hygiene, stress, insomnia, unhealthy lifestyles, and the use of inappropriate hygiene and cosmetic products [3].

Acne patients are prone to anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, and loneliness [4]. This psycho-emotional state often leads them to self-treatment both before and, frequently, even after visiting a dermatologist [5-7]. Modern consumers have developed a behavior of making informed purchasing decisions by independently seeking information on disease

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management and the price, advantages, benefits, and safety of acne products before buying [8-10]. In cases of mild to moderate acne, there is an observed increase in patients independently turning to pharmacies [11-13].

For Georgian consumers, it is particularly convenient to purchase acne treatment cosmetic products from pharmacies, as Georgia has a widely expanded network of community pharmacies that offer a broad assortment of therapeutic and cosmetic products from leading global brands.

The global market for acne treatment cosmetic products is growing every year, reaching USD 5.9 billion in 2023, with an estimated 5% growth over the next 10 years, expected to reach USD 5.9 billion. Last year, the most in-demand product forms were creams and lotions, accounting for USD 2.8 billion, and by 2032, this segment is projected to reach USD 4.5 billion [14, 15]. In Georgia, there is no existing research on the market for acne treatment cosmetic products. In 2024, a growth in the cosmetic product market was recorded, with revenues reaching USD 29.71 million, and it is forecasted to grow at a rate of 3.97% (CAGR 2024-2028) [16].

2. Research Aim

The aim of the study was to investigate the needs and behavior of Acne patients towards dermatological cosmetic products in Georgia and to determine brand awareness for a better understanding of the target market.

3. Research Subject and Methods

The respondents of the quantitative research included individuals with acne and users of dermatological cosmetic products who have battled acne at different stages of their lives. An inclusion criterion of the study was that the respondent must have experienced acne at least once from puberty until now.

The research method used was a structured electronic questionnaire consisting of 20 questions, which was posted in targeted closed groups on social networks (“Acne”, “Skin Health”).

The survey included questions such as “How severe is your acne?”, “What factors do you consider when choosing an acne treatment product?”, “How long do you need for treatment and how much do you spend”, “What is your irreplaceable product or brand”?

4. Research Results

200 respondents voluntarily participated in the study, with the protection of personal data. The majority (85%) were women, and 15% were men. One-third of the participants (32.7%) were aged 12-18, 29.1% were aged 19-25, 21.6% were aged 26-35, and 16.6% were respondents aged 36 and over.

Regarding income, the majority had an income of less than 230 $ USA, a third had an income between 400-740 $ USA, and 14.1% had an income of more than 750 $ USA.

46.5% of respondents had moderate acne, 23.2% had severe acne, and 30.3% had mild acne. Notably, 53% experienced acne symptoms only during puberty, 30.5% (nearly a third) have had acne since puberty until now, and 16.5% experienced acne for the first time in the past few years.

Half of the respondents used self-treatment, while the other half were diagnosed with acne by a doctor and treated according to the specialist’s instructions. 41.3% of participants considered the acne treatment dermatological cosmetic product recommended by pharmacy staff (pharmacists) to be effective, while 40.4% preferred the treatment prescribed by a specialist doctor.

Based on the results of the study (Fig. 1), the majority of respondents valued the advice of both doctors and pharmacists equally when choosing a new acne treatment product, followed by the experience of friends or family, and finally, information available on the internet.

When purchasing an acne treatment product, the following factors were prioritized by respondents (listed in order of priority): composition, brand, safety, country of manufacture, hypoallergenic properties, price, form (gel, cream, serum, etc.), eco-friendly packaging, and vegan product.

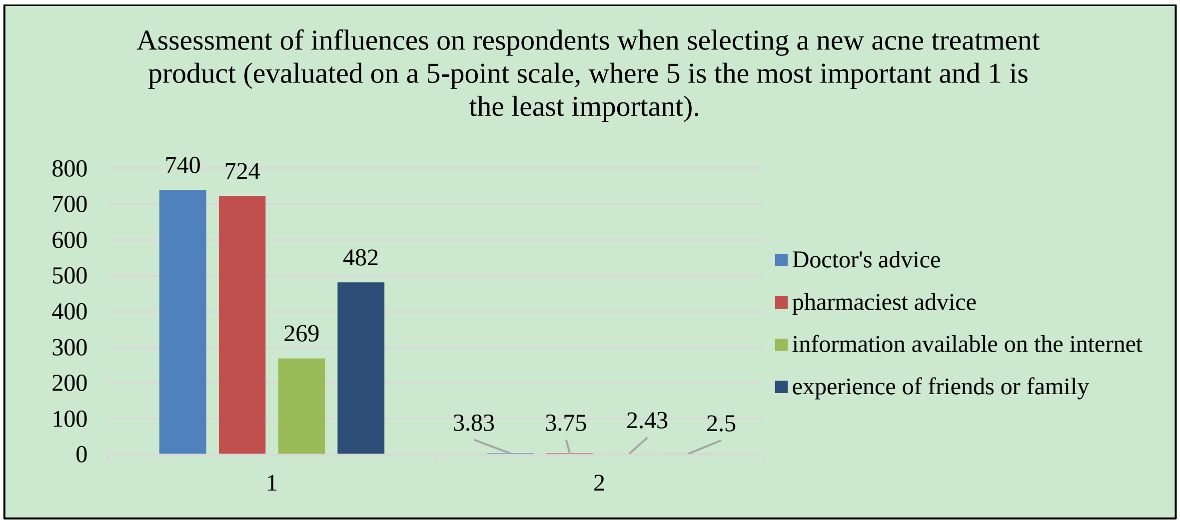

Fig. 1. **Assessment of influences on respondents when selecting a new acne treatment product (evaluated on a 5-point scale, where 5 is the most important and 1 is the least important).**

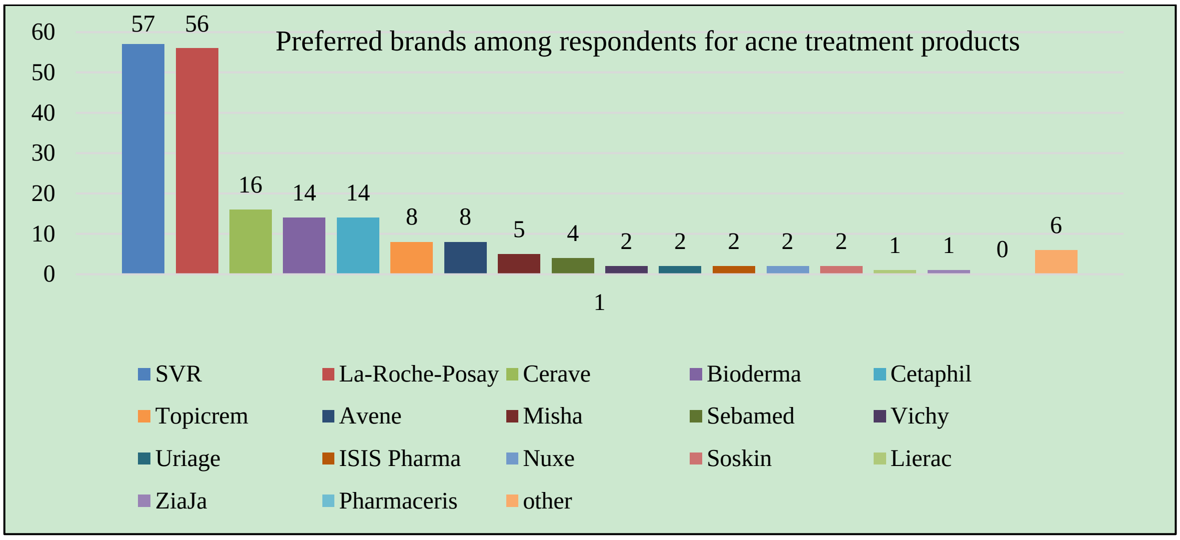

Fig. 2. **Preferred brands among respondents for acne treatment products.**

According to the research results, 49.5% of respondents spend 50 $-120 $ USA on a 3-month acne treatment, while 18% spend more than 120$ USA. Notably, the majority of respondents (67.5%) undergo treatment for more than 6 months.

42.4% of respondents use 3 products during acne treatment, one-third use 2 products, and 12.6% use more than 4 products.

From Fig. 2, it can be seen that, in terms of demand for acne treatment products in Georgia, three brands lead significantly-SVR, La Roche-Posay, Bioderma, and—followed by Cerave and Avene. Other brands such as Cetaphil, Topicrem, Sebamed, and others are also in demand.

In response to the open-ended question—“Please write your irreplaceable brand”—45 respondents wrote SVR, 39 respondents wrote La Roche-Posay, and the rest mentioned various other brands.

According to the research results, 44.7% of respondents prefer a gel form for acne treatment products, followed by creams at 37.2%, with only 8% choosing a local acne treatment stick and 6.5% selecting serum.

It was found that the majority of participants (77.8%) are actively engaged in searching for new acne treatment cosmetic products on the market.

5. Research Discussion and Conclusions

Based on the analysis of the questionnaire data, more than half of the respondents have been troubled by acne from puberty to adulthood and use acne treatment cosmetic products for an extended period.

Despite the fact that acne was moderate or severe in the majority (70%) of respondents, only half sought diagnosis and treatment from a specialist doctor.

When experiencing acne, half of the patients engage in self-treatment and equally prioritize the consultation of a doctor and a pharmacist when choosing dermatological cosmetic products. For their purchase decision, the most important factors are the product’s composition, brand, safety, and country of origin. When selecting the form of the treatment product, they prefer gels and creams.

Among acne treatment cosmetic brands available on the Georgian market, the top three brands favored by respondents are SVR, La Roche-Posay, and Bioderma. Other popular brands include Cerave, Avene, Cetaphil, Topicrem, Sebamed, and Misha.

The majority of respondents (88.8%) use at least two products daily for skincare and undergo treatment for more than three months, with one-third spending over six months on treatment. Half of the respondents spend 50 $-120 $ USA on a 3-month treatment, while 18% spend more than 120$ USA, indicating that acne treatment involves significant financial costs for patients.

SVR and La Roche-Posay were named as irreplaceable acne treatment brands. It is noteworthy that the majority of respondents continue to actively monitor the market for the emergence of new acne treatment products.

6. Limitations and Future Directions

The study was limited by its reliance on a structured electronic questionnaire distributed in targeted social media groups (“Acne”, Skin Health”), which may not fully represent the broader acne patient population in Georgia. The inclusion criterion required respondents to have experienced acne at least once, potentially excluding diverse perspectives. Future research should expand the sample size, include diverse recruitment methods beyond social media, and explore additional factors influencing acne treatment choices, such as cultural or economic barriers, to enhance understanding of patient behavior and needs.

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