

Abstract

Background:

Stigmatization, or labeling, is a phenomenon involving the condemnation of a person or group of people in society. Many conditions are now considered stigmatizing to those who suffer from them, and skin diseases are often mentioned among them. Patients with skin ailments can often exhibit comorbid mental illnesses, as well as a reduced quality of life. Skin diseases have a significant impact on how patients are perceived by those around them, as well as on their own well-being.

Stigmatization and body image disturbances are important measures of the burden of dermatological diseases. These phenomena appear to be a frequent and important problem among dermatological patients. These are conditions that significantly reduce patients' quality of life, thus also affecting their mental health.

Assumptions:

The aim of the presented study was to investigate the psychosocial burden of skin diseases by assessing the phenomenon of stigma and body dysmorphic disorder in a group of patients with skin diseases in Poland compared to a control group. In accordance with the knowledge of the literature, it was assumed that sick people are characterized by higher feelings of stigma and body image disorders compared to healthy people.

Material and methods:

The study included 250 patients of the Dermatology Outpatient Clinic, aged 13 to 88 years, and 125 healthy subjects, aged 18 to 75 years. A set of questionnaires was used for the study, including: Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-4) on which mood disorders in the form of depressive symptoms and anxiety disorders were assessed, Perceived Stigma Questionnaire (PSQ) assessing the perceived stigma and social experiences of people with skin diseases, Dysmorphic Questionnaire (DCQ) assessing BDD-like disorders, Questionnaire (PSS) used to measure perceived stress, Visual Analog Health Status Scale (EQ5D) used to have subjects assess their overall health. Patients were then examined and diagnosed by a physician at the Future Dermatology Clinic. Based on the results, the prevalence of BDD, depression and

anxiety disorders was assessed, as well as differences in the level of stigma in patients compared to the control group.

Results:

Patients with skin diseases are stigmatized by society, and the level of stigma is similar in both sexes. The sense of stigma among patients with skin diseases positively correlates with their perceived stress, dissatisfaction with their appearance, being on sick leave or retired, while no evidence was provided for a correlation with economic hardship, marital status free, or lower education level

In addition, patients with dermatological conditions are more likely to have body dysmorphic disorders compared to those without these conditions. In addition, they are more likely to manifest anxiety and depressive disorders, and more likely to present suicidal thoughts than healthy individuals.

Conclusions:

Patients with skin diseases who manifest psychological disorders, depressed mood, BDD-like complaints, who are stigmatized by society require specialized treatment in the psychological/psychiatric vertical to a degree comparable to the treatment of skin lesions. Dermatological patients undoubtedly require a holistic therapeutic approach including strategies against stigma. The results of the study will perhaps contribute to improving the conditions of treatment and care of dermatological patients, thereby achieving faster remission of the disease and improving the quality of life of patients.