Demographic data and general concepts concerning the disease.

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Background:
Psoriasis is a common cutaneous disease affecting 1% to 3% of the population in Western countries. It has a significant impact on the quality of life of patients, as demonstrated by studies concerning the patient’s own point of view. There are few published data concerning patient perception of psoriasis involving large series of patients. The available epidemiological data on psoriasis are usually derived from cohorts of patients examined by dermatologists in order to classify the severity of the disease, based on the extension of the lesions. Little is known about the patient’s perception of the disease and its general beliefs which depend on multiple social and cultural factors. The present work analyzes the results of a survey conducted among a group of 561 patients, taken from a representative sample of the French population.

Objectives:
We report the demographic data relating to patients with psoriasis in this sample of the French population focused on the analysis of symptoms and physiopathology beliefs. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first study in which such a questionnaire has been submitted to a very large group of people. We present the present analysis of the symptomatology and physiopathology of their disease.

Methods:
The survey was done on a screening sample of 20,000 households, who are representative of the French general population. From a sample of 30,367 individuals, 1414 (4.7%) declared they had psoriasis. Eight hundred of these individuals received a questionnaire, which contained 13 items focused on the description of the disease and 21 on physiopathology. The final analysis was based on the answers of 561 individuals.

Results:
In this study, the signs and course of psoriasis were described by patients and not by doctors. Psoriasis was described in terms of the appearance, size and location of lesions. The majority of patients had plaques only, occurring in successive flare-ups (slightly more often than once a year), which severity was perceived as mild or moderate. Both the visibility of the lesions and functional aspects are significant factors in the self-assessment of severity, since the largest differences between the severe and mild cases were shown when the psoriasis was located on the hands and in folds. A high percentage of patients were unable to answer questions regarding causes or physiopathology. Psychological factors were important to 78% of the group, whereas only 48% thought psoriasis is a psychological disorder.

Conclusion:
This study suggests that 4.7% of French people think they have psoriasis, mainly of mild severity. Altogether these results show a poor level of information on the disease in France. Since a good level of information on the causes and consequences of the disease is likely to enhance the results of treatment, there’s obviously a need for rational, clear information aimed at patients suffering from psoriasis.

References: