

Analysis of Online Communities' Needs Among Psoriasis Patients on Social Media

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To the Editor:

Understanding the patient experience is essential in patient-centered clinical practice. Psoriasis, from mild to moderate, is about improving the quality of life. To create better patient experiences, we need to clearly understand what is important from the patient's perspective. Information from social media is a valuable, unfiltered resource of the thoughts and concerns of patients. Analyzing this data can be an important step in developing meaningful physician-patient relationships. To evaluate this approach, we analyzed Instagram (IG) posts under the tag "psoriasis community" for patient needs.

An Instagram account was created for this study. The tag "psoriasis community" was searched on July 2, 2020, which identified 10,500 publicly available posts. The top 100 posts were analyzed to assess the content. Exclusion criteria included all non-English posts. In total, 79 posts were included in the final analysis. Posts were assessed for primary content and authorship.

Of all the posts, 63.3% were from patients, 21.5% were from companies/products selling treatments, and only 1.3% of the top posts were from healthcare providers/organizations (Figure 1). The content of posts were organized into five categories: advertisements, psoriasis awareness/stigma reduction, personal journey, and inspirational material (Figure 2). 44.3% of posts focused on sharing images of psoriatic plaques to reduce the stigma surrounding psoriasis. 26.6% of posts were longer-form captions of patients sharing their journey with psoriasis, challenges they faced, and advice to other patients. 7.6% of posts featured inspirational messages for patients suffering from psoriasis. There was a total of 1403 comments on the 79 posts analyzed, indicating significant engagement from others.

Further analysis was completed to determine the content of 21 posts that shared information, experiences, or advice. 85.7% of the posts discussed challenges patients have faced, such as stress increasing their flares. 52.3% of the posts discussed the

FIGURE 1. Breakdown of Authorship of "Psoriasis Community" Posts on Instagram. Pictured is the breakdown of authorship of the top 100 posts with the tag, "psoriasis community."

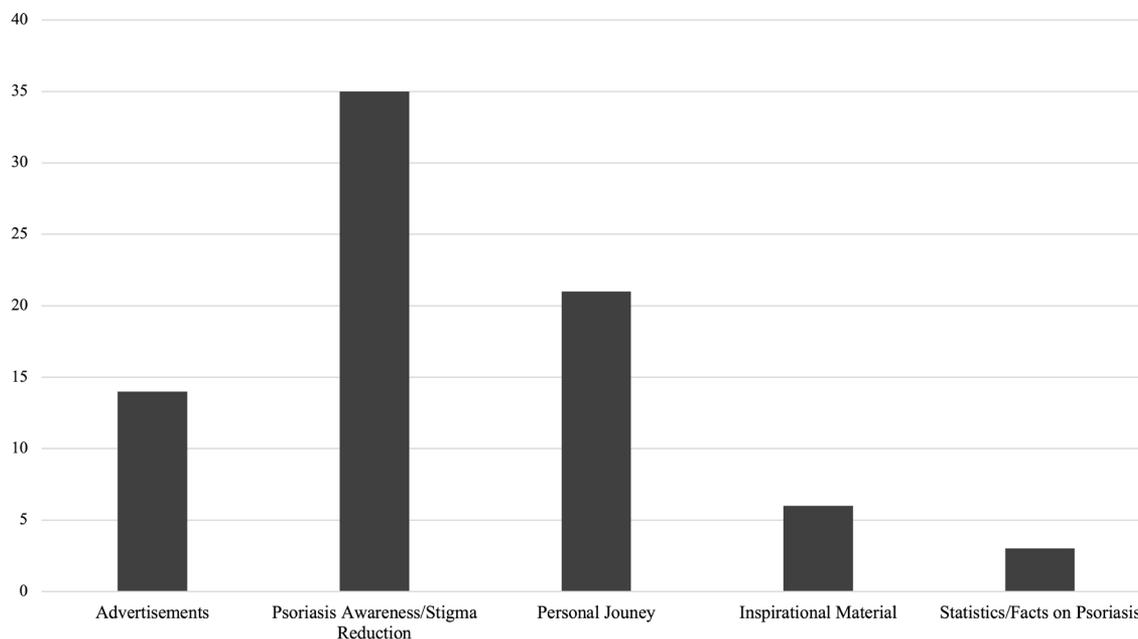
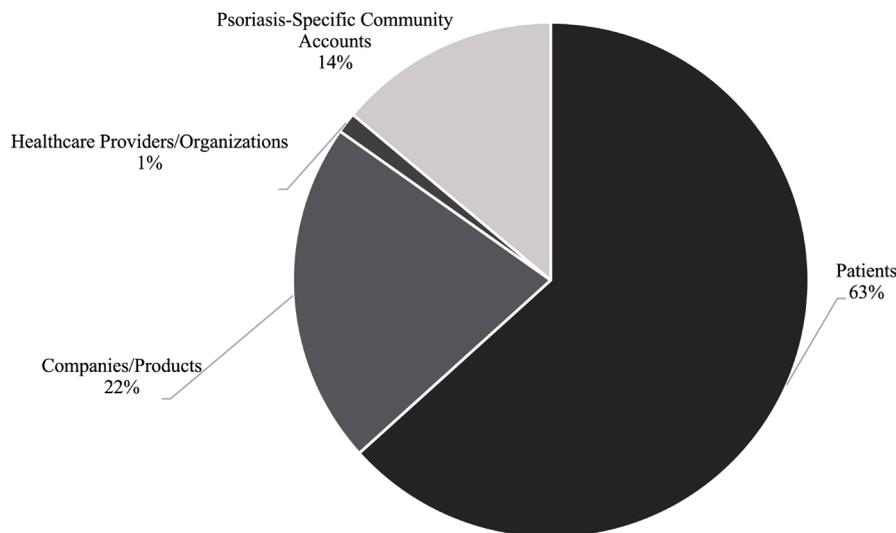


FIGURE 2. Breakdown of the content of "psoriasis community" posts on Instagram. Pictured is the content breakdown of the top 100 posts with the tag "psoriasis community." Pictured is the breakdown of authorship of the top 100 posts with the tag, "psoriasis community."



psychosocial impact psoriasis has had on their self-esteem. 47.6% of the posts shared advice to others with psoriasis, such as improving self-confidence.

This study provides an analysis of the information shared among the psoriasis community on Instagram. The majority of the material shared focused on patients posting pictures of their psoriatic plaques to reduce the stigma and promote awareness surrounding the disease. This demonstrates the significant psycho-social burden patients face regarding the condition and their desire to reduce the stigmatization they feel. In the longer-captioned posts, this becomes ever clearer with patients outlining the significant morbidity they faced throughout their lives. The majority of the posts indicated issues patients had with self-confidence, anxiety, and self-acceptance. Dermatologists should further inquire about the psycho-social burden patients face, such as the impact psoriasis has had on existing and new relationships. For patients who express significant challenges, screening patients for depression or anxiety should be considered. Furthermore, public information campaigns from the American Academy of Dermatology or the National Psoriasis Foundation should include the destigmatization of psoriasis and information on the specific topic areas identified here. Dermatologists may also consider weighing treatment recommendations based not just on PASI but on the visibility of lesions and how the patient has been impacted.

DISCLOSURES

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

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