

COMMENTARY

The perception of dermatologists across Europe: Comments from the tele-dermatology task force

Linda Tognetti¹  | Paola Pasquali² | Elvira Moscarella³  | Pietro Rubegni¹

¹Dermatology Unit, Department of Medical, Surgical and Neurosciences, University of Siena, Siena, Italy

²Dermatology Department, Pius Hospital de Valls, Tarragona, Spain

³Dermatology Unit, University of Campania Luigi Vanvitelli, Naples, Italy

Correspondence

Linda Tognetti, Viale Bracci 16, S.Maria alle Scotte Hospital, Siena, Italy.

Email: linda.tognetti@dbm.unisi.it

Dear Editor,

We read with interest the article ‘Public perception of dermatologists in Europe: results from a population-based survey’,¹ concerning a multinational, cross-sectional study conducted within the framework of the *EADV population-based survey* on the ‘Burden of skin diseases in Europe’. The authors derive their findings from a very large pool of data obtained from 44,689 adults participating to the survey in 27 European Countries, with 18,004 having visited a dermatologist in the preceding 3 years. Interestingly, dermatologists were the second most consulted specialists as referred by 65.5% of the interviewed patients in the last 24 months, and by 48% in the last 3 years. Of note, 45% of patients were referred to a dermatologist directly after the onset of an acute skin disease, in comparison to a 37% who were first referred to their general practitioner (GP). As expected, for chronic skin diseases, skin cancers or sexually transmitted disease, the dermatologist was the first to be consulted in the majority of cases (63% on average). The main causes for dermatologic referral included naevi check-up or skin cancer screening (20.2%), chronic skin diseases (16.5%), acute skin diseases (12.4%), cosmetic advice or procedure (10.2%), hyperpigmentation or congenital lesions (9.1%), and hair or nail disease (7.7%). Satisfaction rates were encouraging as 81% of participants manifested being very satisfied/somewhat satisfied both with the service and the information received. Of converse, the most frequently addressed reasons for dissatisfaction were the treatment ineffectiveness (62.5%) and the high cost of treatment (24.5% of cases). Finally, most

of patients were well disposed to perform a teledermatologic visit if necessary.

This observation is very relevant since the lack of specialists and the growing access to electronic alternatives for consultations will increase the access and reduce waiting time to specialized evaluation. It is also relevant to note that a quote of participants from Western Europe (i.e. 58.4%) responded ‘no, probably not/no’ to the possibility of undergoing a tele-visit. We observed that about 20% of these patients were over 65 years and lived in rural areas. One possible explanation could be the lack of familiarity in performing the online consultations due to technological barrier. A larger study will be needed to confirm this possibility.

Taken together, the data collected confirm the trend highlighted by previous studies^{2,3} on the key role played by the dermatologist as healthcare provider: in particular, the dermatologist appears to be significantly involved in any acute skin manifestation, both primary and secondary, a field in which the GP could be expected to prevail. On the contrary, it turned out that the cosmetology field is not so predominant as expected when looking at the media common communication channel and/or as claimed by other specialists. In the next future, following the experience of the COVID-19 restrictions,⁴ dermatologist will be more and more involved in face-to-face visits and teledermatologic consultations and they will be required, in case of new pandemic, to replace the GP that will be not reachable by patients. In this scenario, not only hospital-based dermatologist but also those on the territory will be required to manage patients with ‘general

Linked article: Richard MA, Paul C, Nijsten T, Gisondi P, Salavastru C, Taieb C, et al. for the EADV burden of skin diseases project team. Public perception of dermatologists in Europe: Results from a population-based survey. *J Eur Acad Dermatol Venereol.* 2023;37(Suppl. 7):27–37. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jdv.18988>.

This is an open access article under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/) License, which permits use and distribution in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, the use is non-commercial and no modifications or adaptations are made.

© 2023 The Authors. *Journal of the European Academy of Dermatology and Venereology* published by John Wiley & Sons Ltd on behalf of European Academy of Dermatology and Venereology.

dermatology' issues, that is those complex cases in which the skin lesion is only an epiphenomenon of an internal condition, and to orchestrate the examinations/consultation with other specialists in order to reach the final diagnosis.⁵ This because the dermatologist appears to be currently regarded by the patients as a reliable and trustable professional figure. Future studies based on Europeans surveys focused on the dermatologists' perception of other specialists who currently deal with dermatologic diseases (infectivologists, plastic surgeons, immunologists, paediatricians, internal physicians, first aid physicians) and GPs could give further insights to complete the analysis of this health care figure.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study is submitted on behalf of the European Teledermatology task force—European Academy of Dermatology and Venereology. Open Access Funding provided by Universita degli Studi di Siena within the CRUI-CARE Agreement.

FUNDING INFORMATION

None.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

None.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analyzed in this study.

ORCID

Linda Tognetti  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6691-4310>

Elvira Moscarella  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5160-8997>

REFERENCES

1. Richard MA, Paul C, Nijsten T, Gisondi P, Salavastru C, Taieb C, et al. Public perception of dermatologists in Europe: results from a population-based survey. *J Eur Acad Dermatol Venereol.* 2023;37(S7):27–37.
2. Richard MA, Joly P, Roy Geffroy B, Taieb C. Public perception of dermatologists in France: results from a population-based national survey. *J Eur Acad Dermatol Venereol.* 2019;33:1610–5.
3. Gisondi P, De Angelis G, Venturelli G, Girolomoni G. Public perception of dermatology and dermatologists in Italy: results from a population-based national survey. *J Eur Acad Dermatol Venereol.* 2017;31:2119–23.
4. Moscarella E, Pasquali P, Cinotti E, Tognetti L, Argenziano G, Rubegni P. A survey on teledermatology use and doctors' perception in times of COVID-19. *J Eur Acad Dermatol Venereol.* 2020;34(12):e772–3.
5. Tognetti L, Fiorani D, Russo F, Lazzeri L, Trovato E, Flori ML, et al. Teledermatology in 2020: past, present and future perspectives. *Ital J Dermatol Venerol.* 2021;156(2):198–212.

How to cite this article: Tognetti L, Pasquali P, Moscarella E, Rubegni P. The perception of dermatologists across Europe: Comments from the tele-dermatology task force. *J Eur Acad Dermatol Venereol.* 2023;37(Suppl. 7):38–39. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jdv.18986>