

# Influence of social networks on the knowledge of the general population about skin care.

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## Introduction

Social networks have allowed innovative forms of social interaction and information exchange, transforming doctor-patient relationships in our field. It is estimated that 80% of Internet users have access to medical topics on the network. A study published in Saudi Arabia reports that 69% of patients considered dermatological media information reliable. To enhance, digital tools have a huge impact on consumer education, especially on medicine topics; however, it can mislead and give detrimental information on dermatological pathologies and treatments.

This study evaluates confidence and knowledge level on digital content regarding the information found on the internet and social media about skin care and dermatosis treatment, as well as identifying the impact that this information has on treatment choice.

## Material and methods

We conducted a descriptive retrospective survey made from February 2022 to April 2022 to different Colombian patients. We assessed their perception of dermatological information provided by the media. Variables analyzed were age, socioeconomic status, perception of dermatology knowledge and truthfulness of information provided by the media (evaluated using a scale from 0 to 10). We collected data using Google forms, then we downloaded the information and analyzed it through Microsoft Excel and RStudio. We did a descriptive analysis of the data as well as multiple logistic and linear regression models adjusted by some demographic variables to evaluate for associations.

## Results

Of 297, 218 (73,4%) were women. Median age was 28 years old. Patients were classified into two groups according to socioeconomic level (low and high). Patients of lower socioeconomic status placed a lower value on their knowledge scale on skin care topics in comparison to patients from high socioeconomic status (Unadjusted difference of means [95% CI lower to upper], adjusted difference of means [95%CI lower to upper]) (-0.66 [-1.13 to -0.20]), - 0.56 [-1.07 to -0.05]). Patients from both groups tended to give a similar value on the truthfulness scale regarding information provided by the media (0.20 [-0.27 to 0.67], 0.09 [-0.43 to 0.60]).

On the other hand, low socioeconomic status patients were more likely to seek dermatological advice from non-medical professionals (Unadjusted prevalence odds ratio [95%CI lower - upper], adjusted prevalence odds ratio [95%CI lower - upper]) (4.26 [1.70 - 12.94], 3.64 [1.35 - 11.61]). Lastly, we did not find any associations between socioeconomic status and the use of homemade face masks (1.51 [0.94 - 2.43], 1.59 [0.92 - 2.77]), however, 62% of our sample have used it.

		Trust level to social networks valued from 1 to 10, being 1 the lowest level and 10 the highest.									
Socioeconomic strata		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Low income	1	1	3	4	1	8	5	3	4	1	1
	2	2	1	8	8	15	8	10	5	1	2
	3	8	2	12	11	17	10	9	1	2	3
High income	4	4	2	8	8	15	6	5	1	0	1
	5	3	0	4	7	10	11	7	2	0	0
	6	2	6	2	1	7	10	7	0	1	1

**Table 1.** Quantitatively shows the level of trustworthiness to social networks per person based on socioeconomic strata. The tendency per group is shown in yellow.

## Conclusions

Currently, easy access to medical information through social networks could potentially impact decision-making to treat symptoms or diseases. In the Colombian context, given the difficulty in accessing health services, these media become one of the first search options when it involves skin care, as was found in our study. Additionally, there are limitations to attending a dermatologist, therefore, most individuals prefer to consult non-medical professionals or close people to ameliorate their skin condition, as was evident in our results. It is necessary to assess in further studies the impact of these informative media with larger populations, in order to encourage the creation and promotion of campaigns that provide truthful information related to skin health and skin care.

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