Atopic dermatitis not only negatively impacts the child’s quality of life but also that of the whole family and is associated with a burden on health-care costs and society

Treatment of Childhood Atopic Dermatitis and Economic Burden of Illness in Asia Pacific Countries by B.W. Lee and P.R. Detzel

Key insights

Atopic dermatitis is the most commonly occurring inflammatory disease in childhood. Contrary to previous belief, this disease not only affects developed countries. In the Asia Pacific, the prevalence of atopic dermatitis is on the rise, affecting not only the patients but their entire families and generating a significant economic burden.

Current knowledge

The costs related to the disease may be classified according to direct costs (associated with the use of health-care resources) and indirect costs (the nonmedical costs such as missed work time and transportation). An infant suffering from atopic dermatitis generates estimated health-care costs between USD 199 and over USD 1,000 per year. In general, the costs are higher in developed countries (such as Australia, North Korea and Singapore) compared to less developed countries (such as the Philippines and Indonesia).

Practical implications

NICE guidelines recommend a stepped approach in the management of childhood atopic dermatitis, with treatment tailored to disease severity. This approach includes education, avoidance of triggering factors, use of emollients and topical corticosteroids, topical calcineurin inhibitors, bandages and systemic immunosuppressive therapy. In the Asia Pacific region, treatment of atopic dermatitis also depends on factors such as the country’s health-care system and the specific climate. Bathing followed by the application of a skin moisturizer are frequently used, but there is no consensus on the frequency or duration of bathing for atopic dermatitis. Bleach baths are useful for disinfecting skin lesions and provide a practical alternative to antibiotic treatment. Further data are needed to identify the most effective and cost-effective measures for treatment and prevention in different countries.

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