

Sleep loss linked to infantile atopic dermatitis has perceived negative impacts for both mothers and infants

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BACKGROUND

Up to 15% of infants are affected by atopic dermatitis, a common skin disease characterized by pruritus and extremely dry skin.

Our research aims to fill gaps in knowledge by gaining an understanding on:

- The burden of having a child with atopic dermatitis
- The impact atopic dermatitis has on the sleep of the mother and child

METHODS

Mothers with infants (age <19 months) suffering from atopic dermatitis were recruited through social media and allergy and dermatology clinics located in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Semi-structured interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and analysed thematically.

Infant atopic dermatitis was classified using maternal-reported data on Patient-Oriented Scoring Atopic Dermatitis tool (PO-SCORAD; maximum score=103 and categorized as; mild<25; moderate 25-50; severe>50).

PARTICIPANT CHARACTERISTICS

Ten interviews were conducted with mothers 29.2±4.96 years old whose infants were 7.6±5.15 months old.

Most infants had moderate atopic dermatitis (PO-SCORAD 34.53±15.86). 80% of infants were male.

RESULTS

"It has been rough because he was losing sleep so we were losing sleep, he has been waking up at night ... starting to [scratch] and cry." – Participant 9

"He used to be up all the time ... scratching and you know I would put mitts on him, he would not keep them on and then he would be bleeding having scratches everywhere and it was just awful, but thankfully it has gotten much better as of late." – Participant 5

We identified one theme, "atopic dermatitis negatively affects sleep quality and quantity of both moms and babies". Most mothers reported that atopic dermatitis impaired both their, and their infant's sleep, due to nighttime awakening subsequent to scratching and infant upset. For mothers, the stress of treating an infant with atopic dermatitis was also perceived to affect sleep quality and quantity, and mothers' moods including feeling miserable. Consistent treatment of the infant's atopic dermatitis was perceived to improve both the infant's atopic dermatitis and sleep quality.

"If he is up, I am up. So definitely, he prevented us from sleeping ... yes it was frustrating, but I mean you can't control it at that point and you feel bad for him." – Participant 7

"Oh completely I feel like both of us were just miserable." – Participant 5

CONCLUSION

Atopic dermatitis severity is perceived to affect sleep. Through regular treatment the condition can improve thereby improving the sleep quality and quantity and reducing the negative impacts of sleep loss on the mother and infant.

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