

**Abstract N°: 265****Dermatologist Perceptions and Experiences Treating Alopecia Areata in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates**

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Introduction & Objectives:

Alopecia areata (AA) is an autoimmune disease, causing hair loss on the scalp, face, and body, with a prevalence of ~2% in the Middle East. AA hair loss is unpredictable, and many patients report experiencing anxiety, depression, and significant impacts to their quality of life (QOL). The kinase inhibitors baricitinib and ritlecitinib both gained regulatory approval in Saudi Arabia (SA) and United Arab Emirates (UAE) for the treatment of severe AA. Understanding dermatologists' views on how they treat AA with traditional therapies will be essential for aligning clinical practice and overcoming barriers to integrating these new therapies into regional healthcare. This study aimed to describe perceptions and experiences of dermatologists treating AA in SA and UAE at the time new treatments were introduced.

Materials & Methods:

Data on dermatologists' perspectives on assessing disease severity and available treatments in AA were drawn from the Adelphi Real World AA Disease Specific Programme (09/2022 to 03/2023) database. Dermatologists rated their agreement with statements about diagnosing and managing AA on a 5-point scale (1=completely disagree, 2, 3=neutral, 4, and 5=completely agree). Analyses were stratified by country.

Results:

103 dermatologists (SA, n=50; UAE, n=53) were included in the analysis. Most reported they had access to diagnostic resources (87% selected 4 or 5), felt confident in diagnosing AA (94%), and found managing severe AA challenging due to lack of effective treatments (80%). Dermatologists reported a mean of 21% of their AA patients had 50-94% scalp hair loss (SHL) and 9% had 95-100% SHL. A mean of 56% SHL was reported as a typical severe AA case; a mean of 77% SHL was considered very severe AA. However, 45% of dermatologists reported the most important factor in determining severity was the impact of AA on the patient's QOL. 85% reported successful treatment was evaluated by the amount of hair regrowth. For patients with $\geq 50\%$ SHL, dermatologists considered regrowth of approximately 50% to be a success. The most reported reason (72%) for considering a treatment switch was if the patient showed a reduced QOL of their therapy.

Conclusion:

Dermatologists in SA and UAE diagnose AA confidently, but managing severe disease remains difficult because of the limited effectiveness of conventional treatments. Severe AA often involves significant scalp hair loss, typically characterized by 50% or more scalp hair loss. Dermatologists reported that impact on patient QOL is considered the most important factor in determining AA severity. Hair regrowth is the primary criterion for determining treatment success, but a reduction in patient QOL prompts treatment switching. This underscores the need to consider the patient's experience as an essential measure of treatment success or failure.

Figure. %SHL dermatologists associated with a diagnosis of mild, moderate, severe, or very severe AA

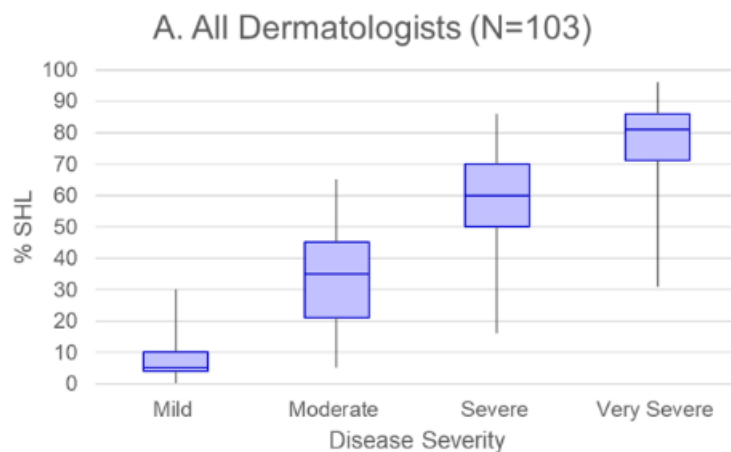


Figure. % scalp hair regrowth associated with treatment success by baseline %SHL

