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“Examination of Medicaid Insurance as a barrier to patient choice in scalp psoriasis treatment modalities in the African American population”

Although psoriasis is less prevalent in the African-American population than in Caucasians, studies show that African-Americans experience a disproportionately worse quality of life and more extensive disease involvement. Scalp psoriasis, a severe and difficult-to-treat disease manifestation in any patient, constitutes a unique challenge for African-American patients and their dermatologists due to the unique texture, practices, and styles of Afro-textured hair. Because of this, it remains critical for African-American patients to have the freedom to choose their steroid vehicle during treatment. Dermatologic treatments are not equally covered by Medicaid and private insurance, so for African-American patients with public insurance, this could constitute a dual-barrier to optimal care for scalp psoriasis. The objective of this study was to examine state Medicaid formularies to assess coverage of super-high and high potency steroids and vehicles commonly used in scalp psoriasis treatment to identify potential barriers in accessing proper care. In total, coverage status of 35 steroid types and vehicle combinations was assessed. Non-Preferred status was not significantly associated with either percentage of the state with Medicaid insurance nor the proportion of a state's African-American population on Medicaid in all but 1 combination analyzed. The results of this study suggest that Medicaid insurance status does not appear to be a significant structural factor contributing to race-based disparities in achieving optimal, patient-driven scalp psoriasis treatment in African-American women. Efforts should be geared toward ensuring that the patients' individual preferences for a steroid vehicle are being explored by dermatologists, given this theoretical accessibility at the insurance level.