

# What influences adult preferences when selecting medical treatment? A pilot study

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## Background

Patient preference is a key factor that can influence treatment effectiveness, as it can impact adherence<sup>1,2</sup>. To investigate as many patient influencers as possible, onychomycosis (fungal nail infection) was the pathology of interest in this study, because it is common, and has many treatments options available<sup>1</sup>.

## Aim

To determine influencers of adult preferences when selecting medical treatments and to ascertain preferred methods of obtaining foot care information.

## Method

An online survey was targeted towards adults who currently or previously had toenail onychomycosis and disseminated via various social media platforms. The survey collected demographic data, treatment options used, and treatment influencers. As the study was preliminary, descriptive statistics were used to analyse data.

## Results

45 respondents completed the survey. 31% of respondents ranked 'treatment effectiveness' as the most important treatment preference influencer, followed by 'health professional recommendation', 'affordability', and 'natural ingredients' (18% respectively, Figure 1). 67% of respondents preferred to access foot care information from a health professional, whilst 33% preferred to obtain this from the internet.

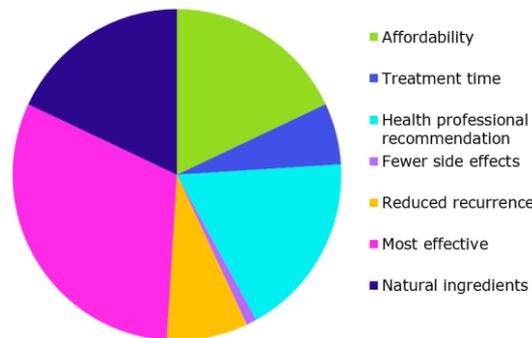


Figure 1: Reported patient preference for fungal toenail treatment choice (%)

## Discussion

Regardless of socio-demographic factors, treatment effectiveness was the most important influencer, followed equally by health professional recommendation, affordability and natural ingredients. The need to clarify patient preference is important as it may help improve treatment outcomes. Additionally, given 67% of respondents preferred to obtain foot care information from the internet, it is important that robust health promotion strategies are utilised by allied health professionals. Future research into key influencers of patient preference is imperative to improve treatment outcomes<sup>2</sup>.

## Key points

Perceived treatment effectiveness is an important influencer of treatment preference. Majority of respondents preferred to obtain foot care information from a health professional.

References: 1. Antonella, T., Tracey, C. V., & Roberto, A. (2017). *Onychomycosis: An Illustrated Guide to Diagnosis and Treatment*. Cham, Switzerland: Springer International Publishing.  
2. Billett, S. (2016). Learning through health care work: premises, contributions and practices. *Medical Education*, 50(1), 124-131.

