DEVELOPMENT AND VALIDATION OF A HEALTH-RELATED QUALITY OF LIFE INSTRUMENT FOR WOMEN WITH MELASMA

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OBJECTIVES: Melasma, a facial pigmentary condition affecting women, can have significant emotional and psychological effects on those affected. Our purpose was to develop and validate a disease-specific HRQoL instrument to identify the areas of the patient’s life most impaired by melasma as well as the effects of the condition on their level of functioning in correlation with disease severity, the Melasma Quality of Life scale (MELASQOL). METHODS: A random sample of 102 women identified by an investigator as having melasma were evaluated by the investigator using the Melasma Area and Severity Index (MASI). The patients were then anonymously surveyed with the SKINDEX-16, the Fear of Negative Evaluation scale, the Dermatology Life Quality Index (DLQI), a specially-developed skin discoloration evaluation questionnaire, and a measure of perceived life quality difference without melasma. The 10-item MELASQOL scale was devised from the comprehensive HRQoL assessment battery. RESULTS: The psychometric properties of the MELASQOL were comparable with the properties of the DLQI and the SKINDEX-16. The MELASQOL scores were highly correlated with the other HRQoL measures. The discriminatory ability of the MELASQOL is superior to the SKINDEX-16 and the DLQI for melasma. The three life domains most adversely affected by melasma (social life, recreation/leisure, and emotional well-being) were highlighted by this instrument. These were the same three areas of life that patients believed would improve the most if they no longer were affected by the disease. CONCLUSION: The MELASQOL can be used to objectively evaluate the effect of melasma on a patient’s HRQoL. The high correlation with the DLQI, the SKINDEX-16, and the skin discoloration questionnaire suggests that the new scale is a valid instrument, which can be used to monitor the level of impairment individuals suffer due to their melasma.