

General public perception of a dermatologist in urban India

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Sir,

Dermatology and its practitioners has always been considered a niche segment. Though they cater to a variety of disorders ranging from debilitating skin diseases to cosmetology, the public perception though could not be different. To analyse the perception a bit more objectively, we conducted a short survey (Using www.surveymonkey.com) among the general public. We surveyed a total of 386 respondents. We focussed on identifying their perception and the importance given to dermatologists in comparison to other fields of medicine.

Some of the significant findings are as below:

1. 62% perceived that dermatologists cater primarily to cosmetic issues
2. 28% perceived that dermatologists treat skin cancer primarily
3. 83% opined that dermatology is of lesser significance compared to General surgery, Medicine, Gynecology and Pediatrics.
4. 76% believed that dermatologists need to work less harder than their peers in other fields
5. 82% believed that dermatologists make more money than others
6. 17% opined that dermatologists can treat life threatening disorders
7. 53% believed that practicing dermatology is easier

compared to others in terms of patient expectations and stress

While most of the findings are exceptionally skewed, it however reflects the state of perception of general public in urban India towards dermatologists. Such findings have been replicated in similar studies in different settings [1,2]. This raises concern towards not only the image projected by the medical fraternity but also the role played by the media. Media tends to brand dermatologist as 'Cosmetologists' thus significantly dwarfing the status in the eyes of the public. This calls for creating more awareness in the general public with regards to the varying aspects and expertise needed and consistently expected from a dermatologist.

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