

HAIR DISORDERS

## THE USE AND COST OF ALTERNATIVE TREATMENTS FOR CICATRICIAL ALOPECIAS

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**Introduction:** Cicatricial alopecia refers to a group of disorders that involve inflammation and subsequent scarring of the follicular ostia and irreversible hair loss. Treatments target inflammation and vary by specific disorder, but include hydroxychloroquine, methotrexate, topical and intralesional steroids, and antibiotics.

**Objective:** The purpose of this study was to characterize alternative treatment interventions used by patients with cicatricial alopecia, as well as the financial implications on this patient population.

**Materials and Methods:** An anonymous, two-page survey was distributed to attendees of the Cicatricial Alopecia Research Foundation Patient-Doctor Conference in June 2018. Only attendees with a diagnosis of scarring alopecia, including, but not limited to, lichen planopilaris (LPP), frontal fibrosing alopecia (FFA), and central centrifugal cicatricial alopecia (CCCA), were invited to complete the survey.

**Results:** Of the 58 participants, all were female and the largest group of patients (47.3%) were between the ages of 41 and 60 years old. The most popular alternative treatment used by patients with cicatricial alopecia was multivitamins (40.3%), followed by herbal supplements (32.8%), Autoimmune Protocol (AIP) or paleo diets (13.4%) and acupuncture (11.9%). On average, patients selected only 1 alternative treatment from the list of 5. Regarding expenditure, 48.2% of patients reported spending between \$1,000 and \$5,000 on their hair loss treatment, including medication co-pays per year, while 25% of patients spent between \$500 and \$1,000. 42% of patients were willing to spend more than \$10,000 on a cure for their hair loss.

**Conclusions:** The uncertain course of cicatricial alopecia disorders, as well as the impact hair loss has on both mental health and quality of life, makes this population especially vulnerable to costly, alternative treatments despite the lack of sound scientific evidence regarding efficacy.