PHOTOTHERAPY, PHOTODYNAMIC THERAPY

PHOTOTHERAPY IN DERMATOLOGY PRACTICE: EMERGING NIGERIAN EXPERIENCE

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Introduction: Phototherapy is the utilization of ultraviolet radiation (UVR) to treat diseases. This study is motivated by the fact that the practice of modern phototherapy using specialized mercury bulbs is quite limited in Nigeria, and there is scarcity of data in the literature regarding the application of phototherapy from resource-challenged dermatology practice.

Objective: This is an observational and descriptive study of the spectrum of diseases and effectiveness of phototherapy at the Dermatology Unit of the University of Abuja Teaching Hospital, Nigeria, from April 2013 to April 2018.

Materials and Methods: Retrospective data was obtained from our medical records on all patients, no sex or age restrictions, who received phototherapy for various dermatological indications during the study period. Data with incomplete information was excluded.

Results: A total of 68 patients were included; there were more males (58.8%) than females (41.2%). The mean age of the patients who received phototherapy was 29.3(95%CI 25.3 – 33.3) years, ranging from 4years to 67years, most of them (72.1%) were less than 40years old. Skin phototype were mainly IV to VI. Two UVR modalities, narrowband UVB (96.8%) and UVA with psoralen (PUVA) were used. Vitiligo (38.2%), progressive macular hypomelanosis (23.5%) and psoriasis (16.2%) were predominantly treated. Most of the phototherapy patients had severe forms of their disease. The average number of sessions per patient was 10.7 (95% CI 8.0 – 13.3), ranging from 1 to 51. Only 17.2% of the patients had more than 20 sessions, while 8 patients received treatment only once. Up to 50% had satisfactory results after 12 sessions. No adverse effect was documented.

Conclusions: Phototherapy is still novel in our environment. It is an effective mode of treatment in persons with dark skin phototypes. Accessibility and cost of treatment are important factors limiting its use.