



QUALITY OF LIFE, QUALITY OF CARE, AND PATIENT SAFETY

## THE JOURNEY OF HAVING SCABIES - A QUALITATIVE STUDY

*B. Trettin<sup>(1)</sup> - J. A. Lassen<sup>(1)</sup> - F. Andersen<sup>(1)</sup> - H. Agerskov<sup>(2)</sup>*

*Odense University Hospital, Department Of Dermatology And Allergy Centre, Odense, Denmark<sup>(1)</sup> - Odense University Hospital, Department Of Nephrology, Odense, Denmark<sup>(2)</sup>*

**Introduction:** Scabies is considered a normal skin infection, but also referred to as a neglected disease. It can cause complications such as secondary infections connected with the development of glomerulonephritis and chronic kidney disease. Furthermore scabies is related to stigma, shame and social isolation.

**Objective:** No studies, using a qualitative approach, have yet explored this area. This study provides an in-depth understanding of patients diagnosed with scabies.

**Materials and Methods:** A phenomenological-hermeneutic approach was applied in this study. Semi structured interviews were conducted with 10 participants with scabies. Data were analyzed and discussed according to Ricoeur's theory of interpretation involving three levels: naïve reading, structural analysis and critical interpretation.

**Results:** The study revealed how patients were affected by an uncontrollable and unbearable itch causing insomnia and distress leading to coping strategies to bring relief seeking for a breathing space. Scabies was experienced as a never ending journey characterized by misdiagnosis, a long period of repeated treatment and lack of information. Not knowing when you are cured resulted in feelings of insecurity and powerlessness. Scabies had an impact on everyday life caused by social withdrawal and due to feelings of shame, guilt and fear of rejection.

**Conclusion:** Having scabies is a journey that consists of uncertainty and is characterized by misdiagnosis, long period of treatment and lack of knowledge. Having scabies is stigmatized causing loneliness and social withdrawal. Patients with scabies are in need of care, support and information regarding physical, emotional and social well-being. There is a need for healthcare professionals to emphasize and acknowledge scabies as a disease that needs proper equal treatment and follow-up according to a guideline. Due to the stigmatization and loneliness of having scabies healthcare professionals should provide emotionally support through a holistic therapeutic approach including anti-stigma strategies.

