

Dermatology Access and Needs of American Indian and Alaska Native People

Background. American Indians and Alaska Native people experience significant barriers to accessing dermatology care related to social determinants of health, including lower education, economic instability, and disadvantages associated with neighborhoods and the built environment. There is a paucity of knowledge regarding the prevalence of skin disease in this population, and their ability to access skin care from dermatologists.

Objectives. To describe skin disease prevalence, barriers to healthcare, and telehealth preferences regarding dermatological care among American Indians and Alaska Natives.

Methods. Data were collected via self-report surveys administered in person at two community powwows in Denver, Colorado in 2021 and 2022.

Results. Most American Indian and/or Alaska Native respondents (94.5%, n=225) reported at least one skin disease. The top three active skin diseases among adolescents were acne, scarring, and eczema. The top three among adults were dry skin, hair loss, and acne. Only 20.9% (n=47) of respondents with skin disease saw a dermatologist. Approximately one-third of respondents (34.0%, n=81) were open to engaging with teledermatology in their home; 43.3% (n=103) were open to engaging with teledermatology in their local clinic; 42.0% (n=100) were not interested in engaging teledermatology from their home or in their local clinic.

Conclusions. Skin disease is prevalent and access to dermatologic care is poor among American Indian and Alaska Native people.