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Access Gaps in Pediatric Dermatologic Care: The Role of General Dermatologists

[Abstract \(1500 max characters\):](#)

Background:

Access to pediatric dermatology is limited. Referring children with common skin conditions to general dermatologists may improve access, but how often general dermatologists see pediatric patients is unclear. This study compared appointment access and wait times between pediatric and general dermatologists.

Methods:

Dermatologists were identified using AAD and SPD directories. Mystery callers, posing as parents of children with hemangioma, atopic dermatitis, or acne, requested the next available new patient appointment. Inclusion required successful contact and an appointment date. Physicians were excluded if in a closed system, required a referral, or were not accepting new patients. Wait times were analyzed using a linear mixed Poisson regression model.

Results:

Of 585 calls, 363 (62%) reached a dermatology practice. General dermatologists were less likely to offer pediatric appointments (58%) vs. pediatric dermatologists (100%,  $p < 0.01$ ). Median wait time was 53 days for general dermatologists (95% CI: 52–55) and 89 days for pediatric dermatologists (IQR: 29.5–120), a 68% longer wait (IRR: 1.68,  $p < 0.01$ ). Pediatric dermatologists had longer wait times in all clinical scenarios ( $p < 0.001$ ).

Conclusion:

General dermatologists were less likely to see pediatric patients, and pediatric dermatologists had significantly longer wait times. Engaging general dermatologists may help improve access for children with common skin conditions.

[Layperson Summary \(max 1000 characters\):](#)

Many children with common skin problems wait a long time to see a pediatric dermatologist. Sometimes, families are referred to general dermatologists instead, but we don't know how often general dermatologists see children or how long the wait is to get an appointment. In our study, we called dermatology offices across the U.S. pretending to be parents looking for the next available visit for a child with skin issues like acne, eczema, or hemangiomas. We found that general dermatologists were less likely to see kids, but when they did, the wait was shorter than for pediatric specialists. This shows a big gap in care access and suggests that involving general dermatologists more could help kids get quicker treatment.