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Qualitative research methods are well respected approaches to understand the social contexts underlying health outcomes for various patient populations. Most disease in the field of dermatology, while not fatal, can greatly affect a patient's quality of life in ways that are often difficult to quantify. The extent to which researchers have conducted qualitative studies in dermatology is unknown. The objectives of this study were to assess 1) current approaches to qualitative dermatologic research and 2) the publication trends of these studies.

We searched PubMed and CINAHL Plus using "dermatology AND qualitative" and "dermatology" and 7 qualitative methodology terms. Studies were selected for inclusion if they were published in the English language, purely qualitative in nature, and related to dermatology. The searches took place from July 23-28, 2022.

A total of 1,398 articles were reviewed, and of these, 249 were qualitative dermatology studies. Common qualitative methodologies included content analysis (23.3%) and grounded theory/constant comparison (13.7%). Individual interviews were the most common data collection method (79.5%), and patients (69.9%) were the most common participant type. Patient experience (55.0%) was the most common investigated topic. Overall, 52.6% of qualitative dermatology studies have been published in dermatology journals, and 48.2% of qualitative dermatology studies have been published within the past two years.

Qualitative research in dermatology is gaining popularity. Qualitative studies can help dermatologists gain a deeper understanding of the unique perceptions and experiences of patients in dermatology. We encourage researchers in dermatology to incorporate qualitative methodologies and methods in their studies, especially as an approach to interact with populations who are often underrepresented in statistical data and research.