



Revealing the Unseen Burden: A comprehensive analysis of social and economic burden of Atopic Dermatitis on patients, caregivers, and their perception on the health system’s response to their unmet needs in Argentina

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BACKGROUND

Atopic Dermatitis (AD) is a chronic inflammatory skin condition with a multidimensional burden encompassing physical, emotional, psychological, social, and economic challenges.(1) In Argentina, the prevalence of AD in individuals aged 6-7 years and 13-14 years is 6.4% and 7.2%, respectively, while the AD prevalence in adults is 5.3%.(2)

OBJECTIVE

To estimate the socioeconomic burden associated with both pediatric and adult AD in Argentina, and to explore patients’ and caregivers’ experiences with the health system response.

METHODS

Survey design

- We conducted online cross-sectional surveys for two target populations in Argentina:
 - Adults (aged 18 years and above) diagnosed with AD.
 - Pediatric population with AD through their respective caregivers.
- We employed a convenience sampling method.
- Dissemination and data collection: June 2023 to September 2023.
- Data collected in the questionnaire:
 - Sociodemographics and clinical characteristics
 - Out-of-pocket expenses
 - Cost of lost work productivity
 - Informal caregiving cost
 - Estimation of Quality of life
- The Cost-of-illness analysis was used to obtain the costs associated with AD,(3) and EuroQoL and CarerQoL were used to assess the quality of life of patients and caregivers, respectively.(4)

Qualitative design

- Consisted of two face-to-face focus groups and five virtual semi-structured in-depth interviews with both target populations.
- Aspects analyzed:
 - Barriers and facilitators in the diagnosis phase;
 - Impact of the disease on daily life at work, school, and emotional levels; and
 - Obstacles, unmet needs, and possible improvements in the relationship with the healthcare system.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of some characteristics of the sample

	Adults patient survey	Pediatric patient survey	
	Patients > 18 yo (n = 1412)	Caregivers (n=1471)	Patients < 18 yo (n=1109)
Age, mean (sd)	33.8 (10.55)	37.8 (7.42)	7.51 (4.59)
Gender, % (n)			
Female	88.1% (1244)	94.49% (1,390)	53.38% (592)
Male	11.26% (159)	5.37% (79)	46.35% (514)
Other	0.64% (9)	0.14% (2)	0.27% (3)
Severity of AD, % (n)			
Slight	24.44% (348)	-	31.46% (349)
Moderate	36.17% (515)	-	37.33% (414)
Severe	38.48 (548)	-	30.7% (341)
N/A	0.91% (13)	-	0.4% (5)

CONTACT INFORMATION

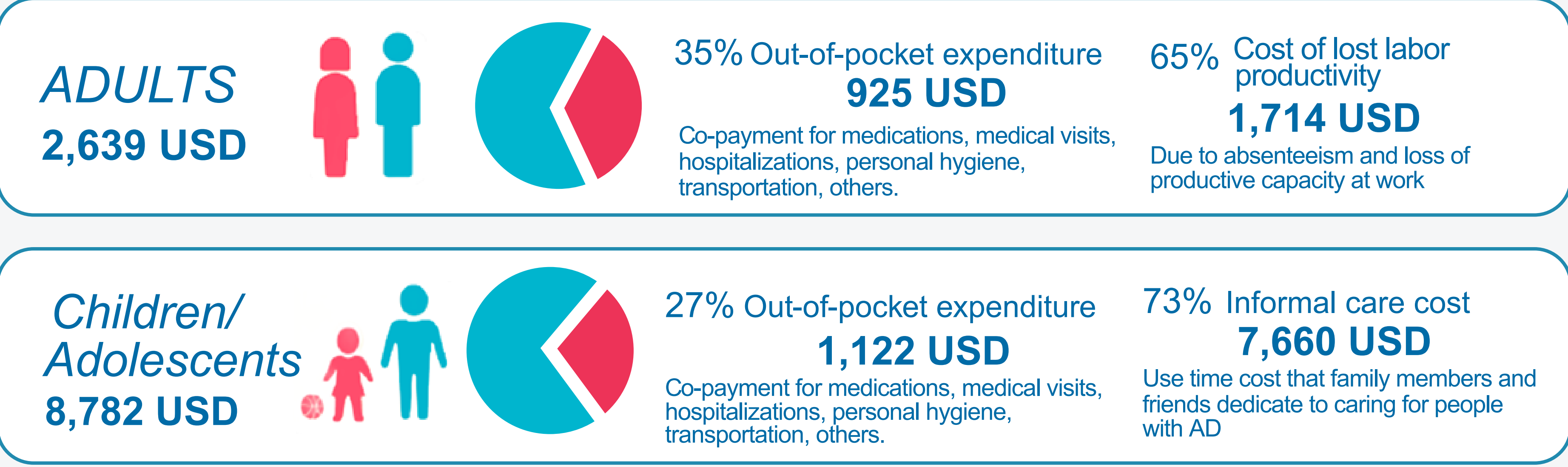
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FUNDING

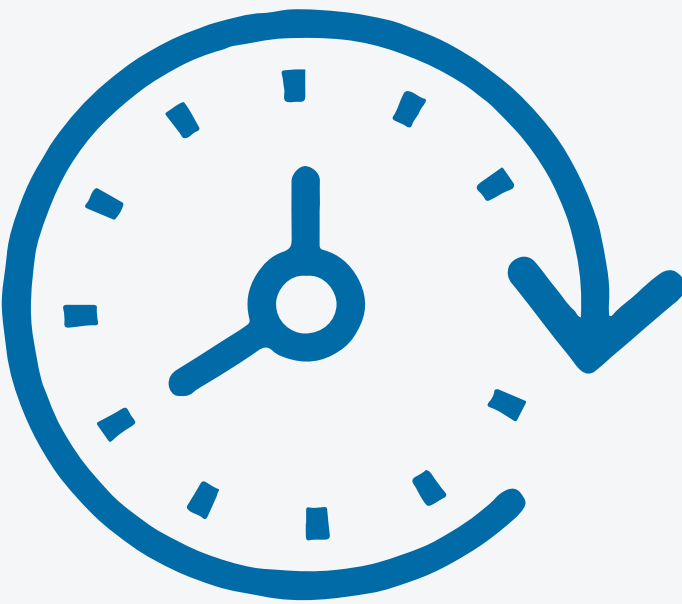
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RESULTS

The annual cost of atopic dermatitis*

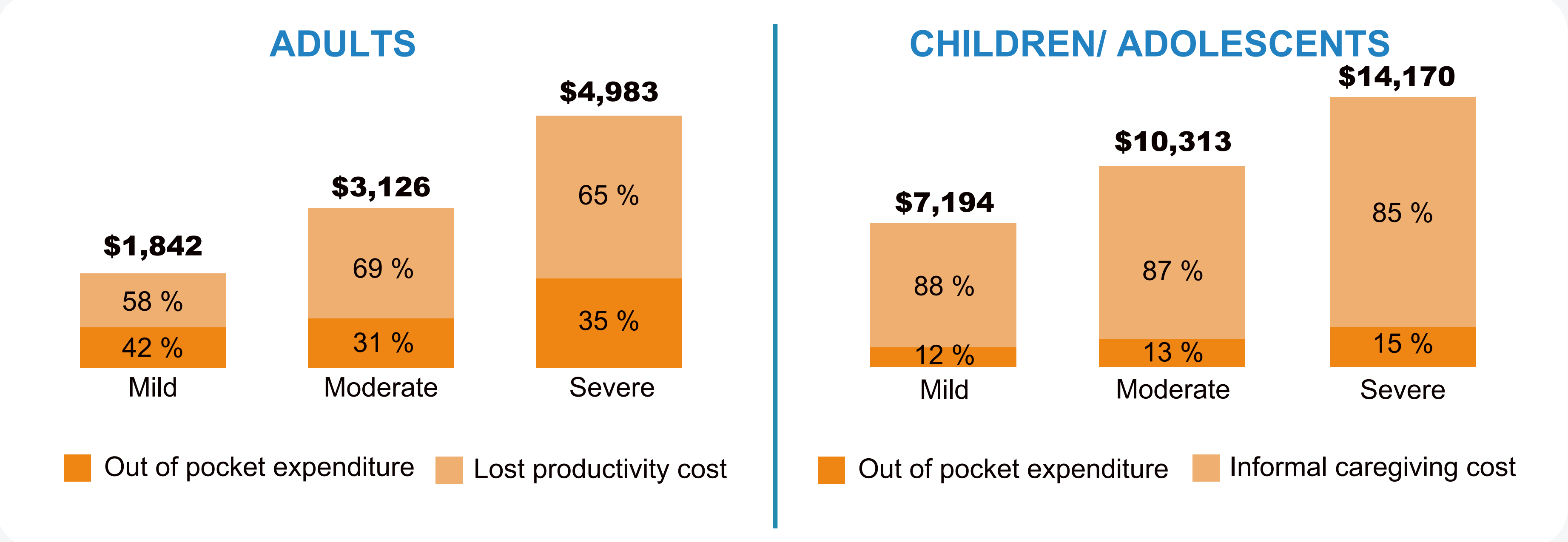


*All costs were reported in Argentine pesos (ARS) and converted to US dollars (USD) for 30 September 2023 (1 USD = 365.60 ARS). Average costs are estimated as a weighted average by severity of the disease.



- **99 working hours/year are lost (1.9 hours/week) due to AD, 4.56% working hours/week in Argentina.**
- **Caregivers dedicated 27 hours/week on average to the healthcare of their children and adolescents with AD.**
- **Children and adolescents miss approximately 8 days of school per year (4% of the total days of the academic calendar)**

Annual cost per AD severity



- **The highest out-of-pocket expense faced by patients is for skincare (41%), followed by travel, personal hygiene, and other costs (33%), and copayments for healthcare services and medications (27%).**

Psychosocial burden of atopic dermatitis

Adults	Mean EQ-5D-5L index	0.87
Children/adolescents	Mean EQ-5D-Y index	0.69
Caregivers	Mean CarerQoL-Tariff	45.89

- Interview participants reported experiencing anxiety, distress, depression, and insomnia, primarily attributed to the discomfort and visible symptoms associated with the illness. Caregivers indicated heightened vigilance, which may have impacted their sleep quality.

CONCLUSION

- **The socioeconomic burden of atopic dermatitis (AD) in Argentina imposes substantial costs on both patients and caregivers.**
- **AD has a significant impact on the quality of life of patients and caregivers, contributing to emotional, psychological, and financial stress.**
- **A prompt response from the health system is essential, and collaboration with patient associations is recommended to address these needs effectively.**
- **Limitation: Efforts were made to recruit as many patients and caregivers as possible; however, a convenience sampling method was used, which is nonprobabilistic and nonrandom. Nevertheless, this study provides a valuable initial step toward understanding the socioeconomic burden of the disease.**

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