Panel Discussions Among Hyperhidrosis Patients to Assess Lifestyle Limitations, Treatment Regimes, and Compensating Behaviors

Mike Thomas MBA[1], Lisa Pieretti MBA[2], David Swaile PhD[1], Amy Capretta BS[1], Theresa Hill BS[3]

[1]Procter & Gamble Company, Cincinnati, OH; [2]International Hyperhidrosis Society, Philadelphia, PA; [3]Independent Consumer/Product Understanding Consultant

INTRODUCTION

Hyperhidrosis is a disease characterized by perspiration in excess of the physiologic amount necessary to maintain thermal homeostasis. Patients can have excessive sweating either in a localized focal area or generalized over the entire body. Primary disease is usually focal, affecting the soles, palms, and axillae in various combinations and with varying degrees of severity. [1]

Although Hyperhidrosis is estimated to affect at least 10 million people in the United States alone, the general public is largely unaware that this medical condition even exists. The hyperhidrosis patient, acutely aware of the social taboos of perspiration, often suffers in silence, managing the condition with a wide range of compensating behaviors. Additionally, while these compensating behaviors can provide some degree of relief, they often come at the expense of compliance issues such as irritation and damage to clothing.

OBJECTIVES

▪To better understand the lifestyle impact, compensating behaviors, and treatment experiences of hyperhidrosis patients, so as to provide improved communication about the condition.

▪To understand issues and initiations of current topic treatments for excess axillary sweating.

METHODOLOGY

Moderated panel discussion with female hyperhidrosis patients to better understand the impact of excessive sweating. A total of 21 panelists participated in 1 of 3 sessions conducted in Philadelphia, PA and Cincinnati, OH. The research consisted of panel discussions moderated by an independent consultant, who guided the panelists through the following topics:

- Lifestyle limitations as a result of the disease
- Personal and doctor-prescribed treatment regimes
- Compensating behaviors for treatment failures

Panelists were recruited from a database of hyperhidrosis patients compiled by the International Hyperhidrosis Society, with the criteria that they be female and live within 90 miles of the research facility.

- The panelists were of ages ranging from 14 to 52 (Average Age- 29).

LIFESTYLE LIMITATIONS

Results from the panel discussions illustrated that Hyperhidrosis impacts women's lives on multiple levels. From personal relationships with family and friends, professional interactions, and their confidence and self esteem, the excessive sweating they experience has a substantial impact on their quality of life, virtually every moment of every day.

'I wish I could just randomly hold my child's hand without even worrying about what she's going to think about me if I start dripping.'

''We were running around… I had to put my shirt around my waist because I had a spot on the back of my pants. From the waist down to the knees. It looked like I wet myself and I didn't want people to make fun of me on the last day of school.'

'When I had to wear suits, it was horrible. I'd sweat right through the suit. So I'd send them to the dry cleaners. Every month I bought new shirts. It's embarrassing to be sweating. It's not normal. '

''It takes over your life, you think about it all the time. It's an obsession but it's uncontrollable. It becomes your life. It is the controller.'

COMPENSATING BEHAVIORS

The panelists discussed a broad variety of compensating behaviors that they have adapted as a means of dealing with excessive sweating. Many of the behaviors are inconvenient and time-consuming, contributing to the panelists' feeling that their bodies' dysfunction controls their lives.

'I keep a fan in my bathroom while I'm getting ready because I don't want to be sweating while getting ready. I won't put a piece of clothing on until I'm almost ready because I'm just going to sweat through it.'

'I've tried everything like taping tissues and pads in my underarms and they'd just fall off or like tucking things up there and then just keeping your arms down to the sides the whole day and then you forget and it just drops out. '

'I wear sweat shirts even when it's not hot because it's harder for the sweat to go through. It gets unbearably hot.'

TREATMENT REGIMES

The majority of the panelists had tried a wide variety of topical treatments for addressing axillary sweating and provided these insights:

Prescription Aluminum Chloride Products
- High Efficacy during usage.
- Poor Compliance due to severe irritation

OTC Aluminum Chloride
- Moderate to high efficacy
- Skin irritation (50%*) still limits compliance

OTC with Aluminum Zirconium Actives
- Moderate Efficacy with Low Irritation

Panelist unaware that efficacy will be increased by night time or twice daily application [2]

'I got the (Prescription Strength product) It just burned. For me to go through the burning sensation just wasn't worth it.'

NOTE: In this study only a small number of panelists had tried surgical procedures/Botox, so the focus was on topical products.

CONCLUSIONS

- **Clearly, the research illustrates that the millions of people throughout the world who suffer from hyperhidrosis face an isolating, embarrassing, and damaging struggle every day. Sweaty palms, sweaty feet, sweat soaked armpits and dripping foreheads--hyperhidrosis takes a heavy toll on a person's life.**
- **Lack of awareness, both of the disease itself and of potential treatment options represent the primary barrier to hyperhidrosis sufferers finding the relief they need.**
- **It is recommended that patients diagnosed with excess axillary sweating should first try an OTC soft solid antiperspirant (clinically proven to be the most efficaceous form) twice a day to maximize the efficacy of this high-compliance form.**

References

1.International Hyperhidrosis Society. http://sweathelp.com/English/PFF_Hyperhidrosis_Definition.asp, 2005.

2. Swaile DF, Chabi GH, Putman CM. Clinical Comparison of Antiperspirant Efficacy as a Function of Morning and/or Nighttime Application. American Academy of Dermatologists Annual Meeting. 2005.

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