

# Société Française de Médecine Générale

[www.sfmq.org](http://www.sfmq.org) -E-mail : [sfmq@sfmg.org](mailto:sfmq@sfmg.org)

## Herpes virus, Varicella, and Herpes Zoster virus in general medicine : some useful markers

J.L. GALLAIS, P. BOISNAULT, P. CLERC and coll.

**ORGANIZER** : Société Française de Médecine Générale, 27 boulevard Gambetta, 92130 ISSY LES MOULINEAUX. France.

**OBJECTIVE** : To better organize strategies for information and training, the aim of our study was as follows:

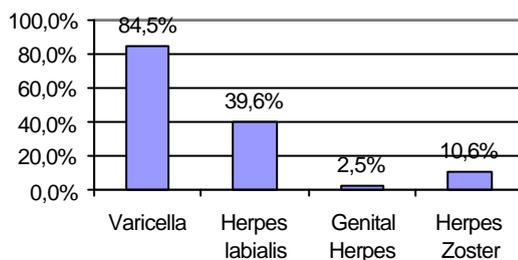
- to determine the respective rank of the most common types of herpes virus infection (Herpes labialis and genital herpes, Varicella and Herpes Zoster) in the previous medical history of patients who consulted a general practitioner.
- to determine the knowledge and opinions of all patients on herpes labialis and genital herpes as STDs.
- to describe the episodes and behaviors of patients with a previous history of herpes infection, and the measures they take for treatment.

**METHODS** : From June 1 to September 30 1998, a questionnaire was systematically given to patients of 15 years of age and over who consulted a general practitioner. A sample of 4503 patients representative of patients in general medicine was interviewed by 49 general practitioners participating in a national observation network of the French Society of General Medicine (société française de médecine générale – SFMG).

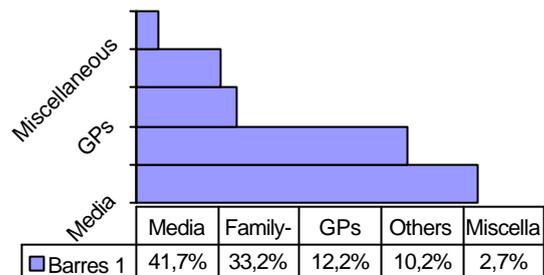
**RESULTS** : Results involved 4403 patients over 15 years of age (97.2%) who agreed to answer the questionnaire : i.e. 1803 men (39.8%) and 2727 women (60.2%). The median age was 47 years.

On average, 39.6% of patients reported a known previous history of herpes labialis, 2.5% of genital herpes, 84.5% of varicella, and 10.6% of herpes zoster, with a lifetime prevalence of 25% for herpes zoster. Knowledge on herpes labialis and genital herpes in all of the patients is limited; over 4 out of 10 patients do not know that herpes can involve the sex organs and that it is a STD. This lack of knowledge is significantly higher in men than in women. As a source of information, all general practitioners, gynecologists and dermatologists play a limited role (22.4%) compared to the media (41.7%) and the patient's close friends and family (33.2%). In over half the cases, the general practitioner was, in fact, the source of medical information.

### Past histories reported by patients

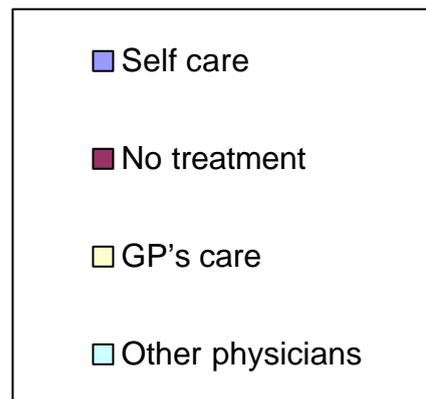
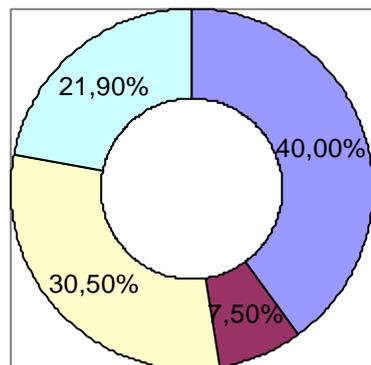


### Source of information on herpes



During the last acute episode of herpes labialis, patients initiated treatment themselves in 62.9% of cases, in 29% of cases they preferred waiting for spontaneous recovery, and in 7.5% of cases consulted a physician. For genital herpes, 40% of patients initiated therapy themselves, 7.5% preferred waiting for spontaneous recovery, and in 52% of cases consulted a physician.

### Patient's management during the last episode of genital herpes



When medical intervention is sought, the majority of patients consult their general practitioner, both for herpes labialis and genital herpes : in 7.4% of cases of herpes labialis, and in 30.5% of cases of genital herpes.

Out of the 60% of patients who presented with symptomatic herpes labialis during the past year, the mean number of recurrences identified is 2.6 per year. Out of the 40% of patients who presented with symptomatic genital herpes during the year, the mean number of recurrences identified is 2.8 per year.

Percentage of patient acceptability of a medical interview of this type and initiated by the general practitioner is high (97.2%); only 6.3% of patients feel that some questions are difficult to broach on their own initiative

**CONCLUSION** : The study illustrates the usefulness and need for studies on epidemiology, how to present them, and how to care for health problems, both for health care professionals as well as patients. Studies of this type can better define and classify the requirements for new strategies of intervention, both in the field of health care as well as health care education

**CONTACT** : Dr Jean Luc GALLAIS, 5 rue la Vacquerie 75011 Paris (France). Email : [jl.gallais@sfmg.org](mailto:jl.gallais@sfmg.org)