



Food Allergy and Quality of Life of South African Children and Parents

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Abstract

Introduction: Food allergy (FA) can affect the quality of life of a child, parent, and family through various factors. South Africa (SA) regulates the presence of significant allergens in food which includes provision for a Precautionary Allergen Labelling (PAL). These measures are to mitigate food allergic reaction from occurring. However, an allergic reaction affects the QoL of the individual and family. It is important to explore the concept of QoL and FA in the South African context.

Methodology: This is a cross-sectional study with the primary aim to determine food allergy's effect on the parental QoL and perceived child QoL. This study population consists of children 0-12 years with a confirmed food allergy and their parents/guardians. Data is being collected through online and hard copy questionnaires disseminated to private and public allergy clinics, Paediatricians and Dietitians working with FA and advertisements through Allergy Foundation South Africa. The European Academy of Allergy and Clinical Immunology developed validated tools namely child-form and parental burden questionnaire, which are used in this study. Ethics approval number S20/06/144.

Results and Discussion: Data collection started in November 2020 and will continue until a sample size of 154 is reached. Prevalence of FA has increased over the decades and there is currently no cure. FAs afflicts the patient's physical well-being and the social and emotional aspects which are intertwined in the complexity of QoL. The impact of FA extends to the parent and family QoL, affecting them socially, emotionally, and financially. Data on allergy prevalence in SA is scarce. A Western Cape study showed a higher prevalence of FA in the urban setting (2.5%) versus a rural setting (0.5%).¹ SA provides a unique study population with its heterogeneity in education levels, income, and access to medical care.

Conclusion: A FA can impact a number of aspects and can have a major effect on the QoL of both the patient, the parents and the family. QoL is an essential aspect to be addressed in the management of food allergy. The results of this study may also be beneficial to regulators and the food industry.

Biography: Paige Moolman

Paige Moolman is a Registered Dietitian and in private practice in Durban, South Africa. Paige is currently completing her Masters degree in Therapeutic Nutrition through Stellenbosch University.