Quality of Information on Molluscum Contagiosum Disease Websites

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Most Commonly-Visited Molluscum Informational Websites

Medical CDC **News Today** VeryWell **WebMD** Health Society **EMedicine** for Pediatric Dermatology **Up to Date Mayo Clinic** HealthLine

INTRODUCTION

- Consumers increasingly engage in online health information-seeking and use the information to understand medical conditions and treatment options.¹
- Molluscum contagiosum is a common pediatric skin infection for which there are no clinical guidelines in the US.
- Due to this, consumer-focused websites may vary in the quality and quantity of scientific and medical information provided.²
- This project aimed to identify the most visited informational websites about molluscum and review the information provided to consumers.

METHODS

- A Google search conducted in December 2018 identified the 13 most visited informational, non-promotional consumer websites for molluscum contagiosum.
- Each website was reviewed by two authors from December 2020 through February 2021.
- Information collected (e.g., symptoms, disease duration and progression, diagnosis) was compared to peer-reviewed published literature.

RESULTS

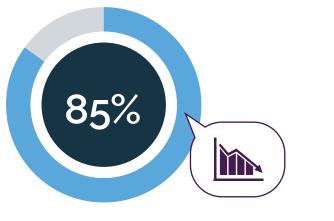
Molluscum Information By Percentage of Websites Providing the Information



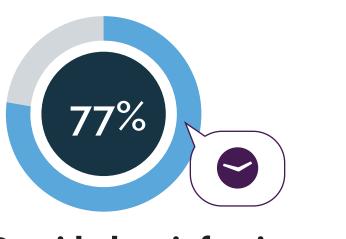
Provided information about disease transmission



Described molluscum as a contagious viral infection of the skin



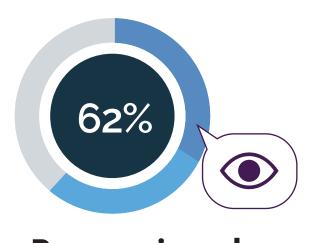
Described infection as "self-limiting"



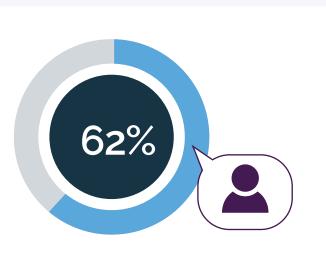
Provided an infection incubation period (the durations varied widely)



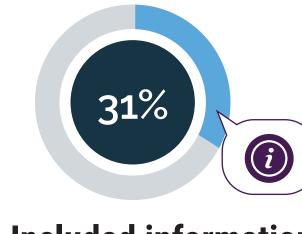
Described itch as a frequent symptom



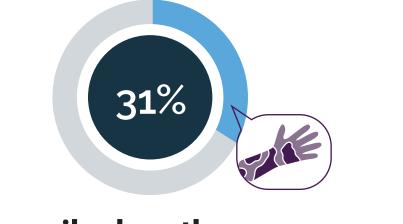
Peer-reviewed, 4 sites peer reviewed by a dermatologist



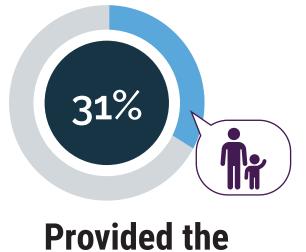
Website authors identified



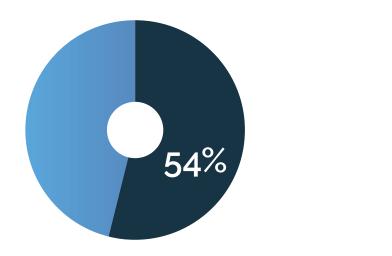
Included information about the BOTE Sign*



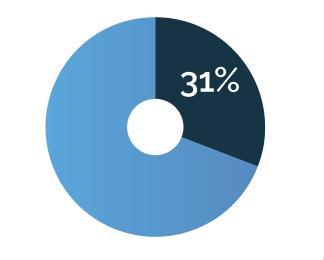
Described erythema as a frequent symptom



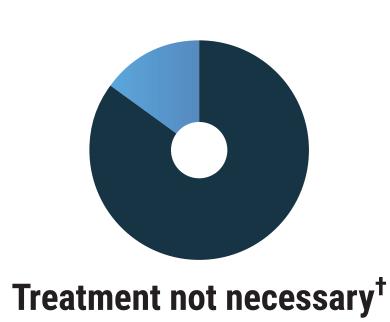
average lesion count



Treatment recommended



Treatment not recommended



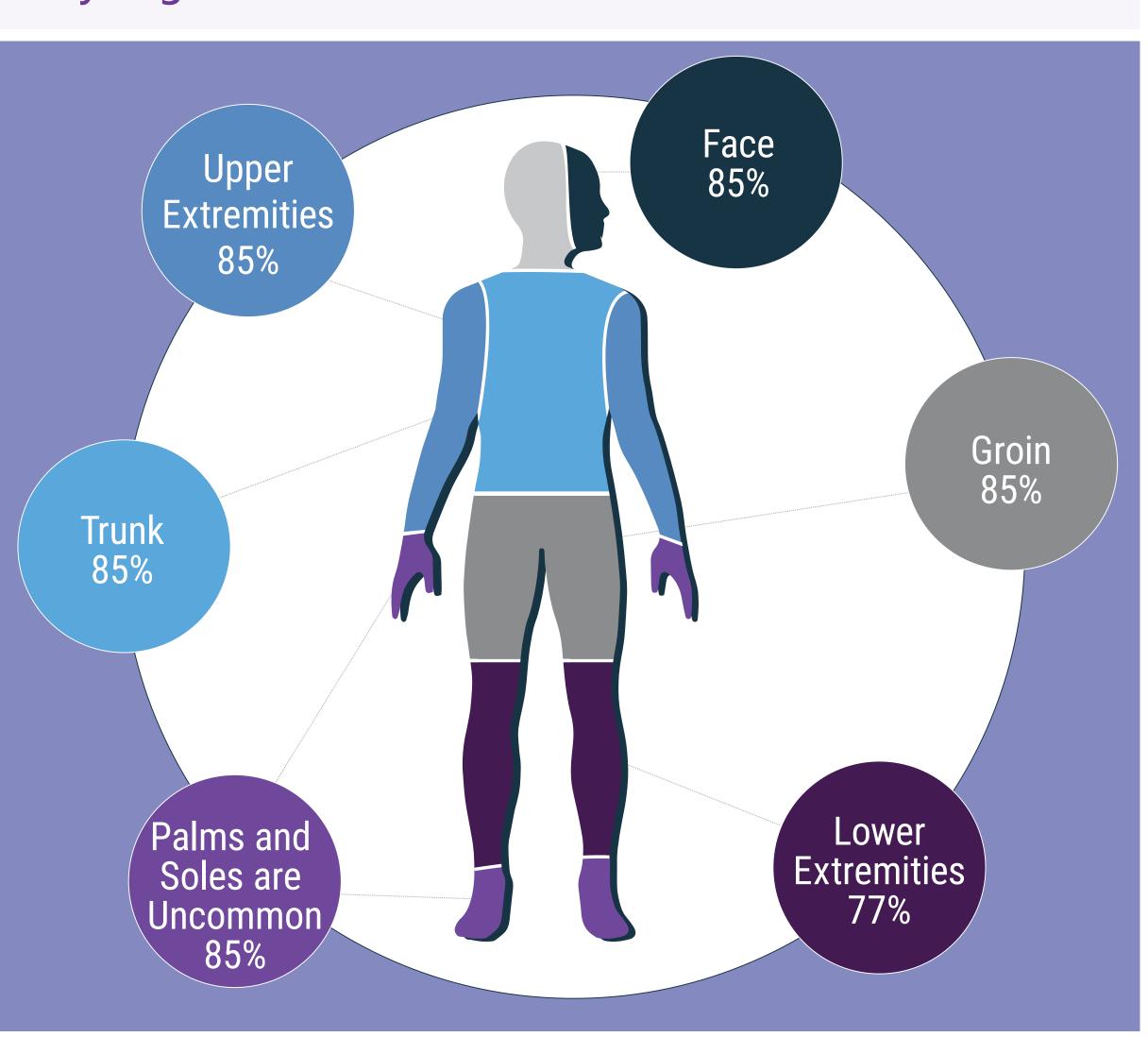
lesions. † This was one of several recommendations

* BOTE=beginning of the end, inflammation

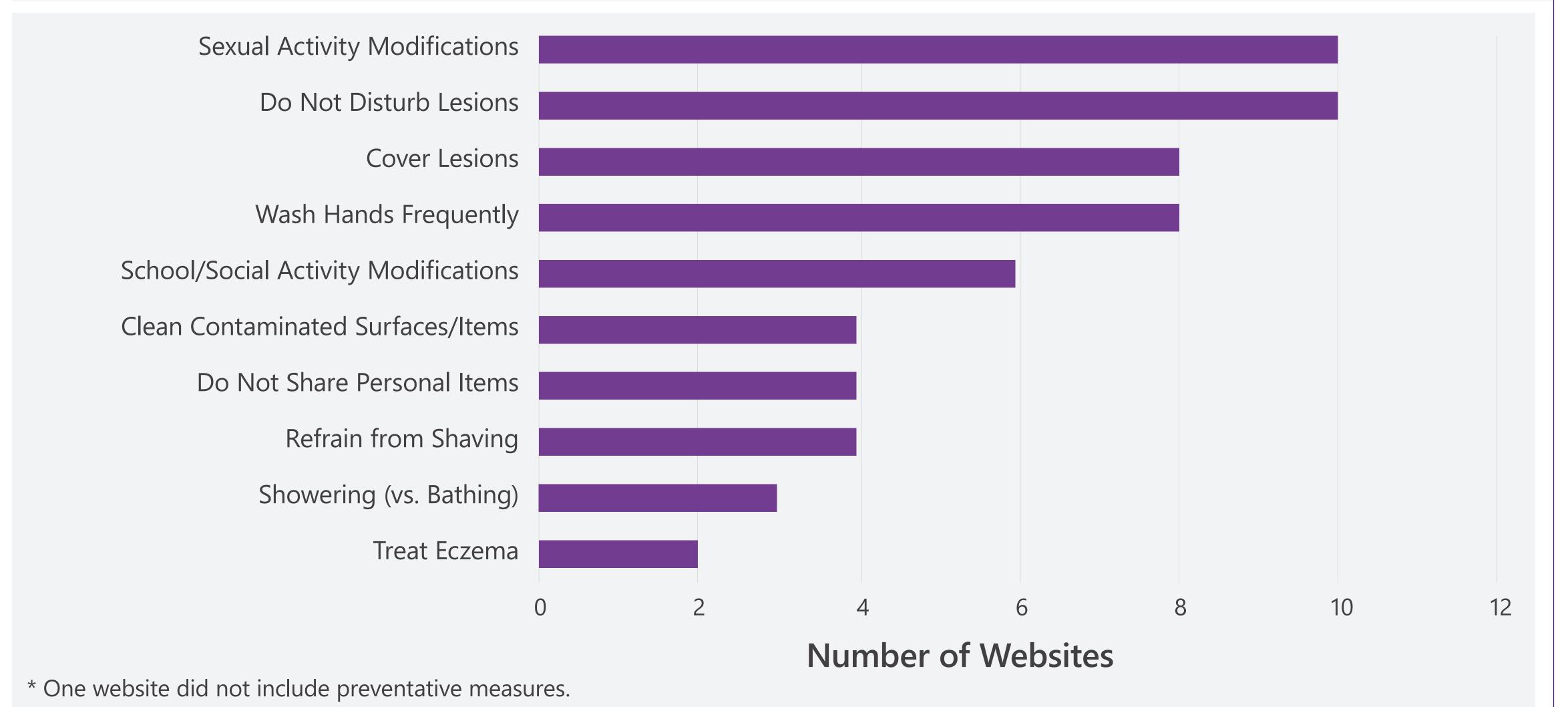
heralding the spontaneous resolution of

on a website.

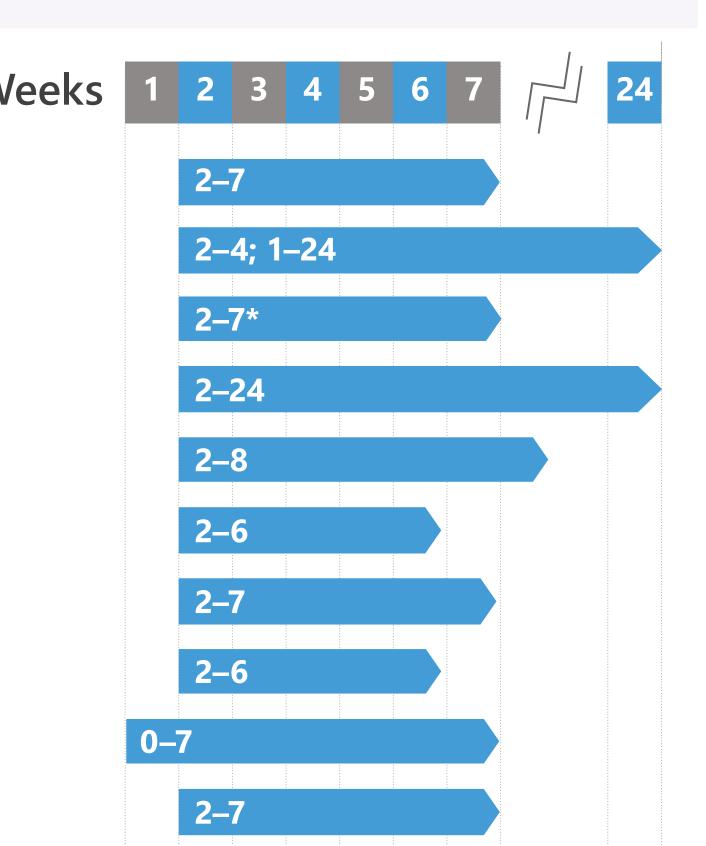
Body Regions Described as Common Locations for Lesions



Preventative Measures Mentioned on Websites



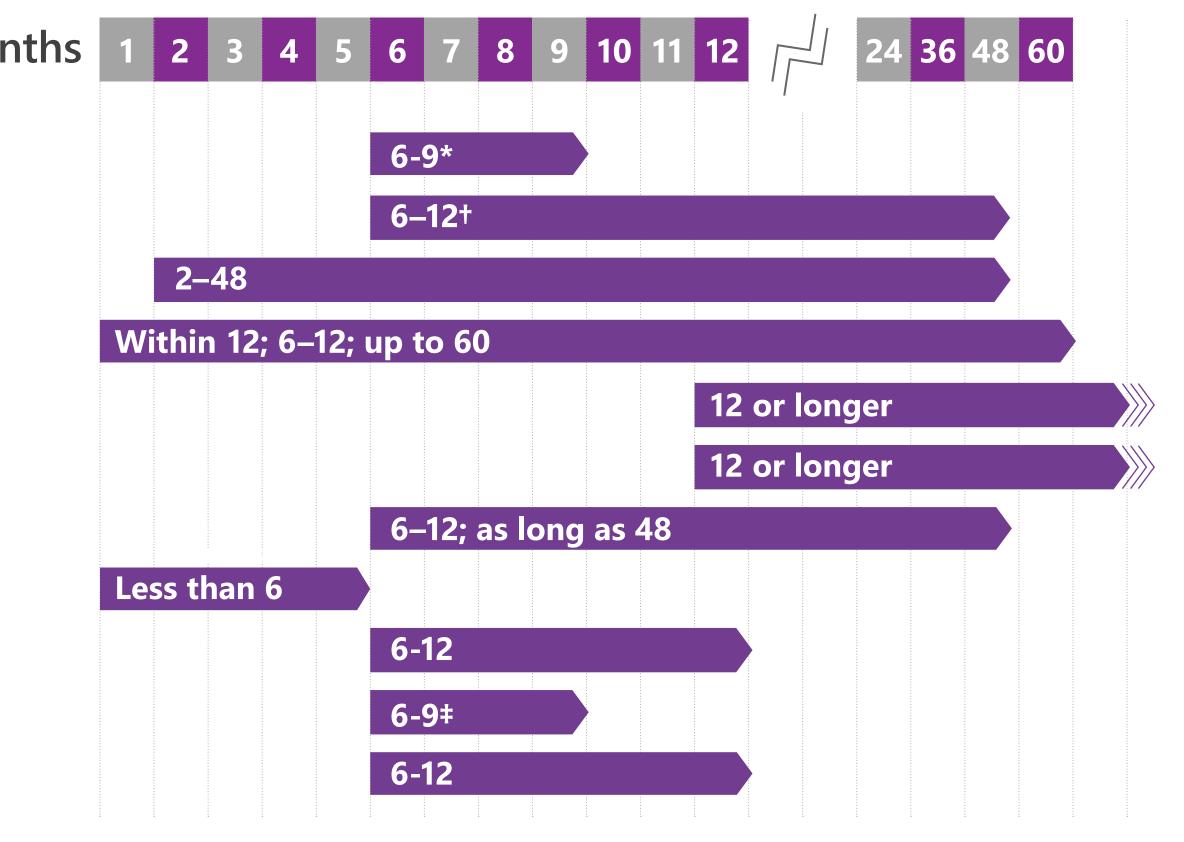
Incubation Period



Incubation information not provided by 3 websites. Two websites provided multiple incubation periods and are not shown in the figure: website 1) 1–6 months, average 2–7 weeks, and up to 6 months, and website 2) 2-4 weeks; 1-6

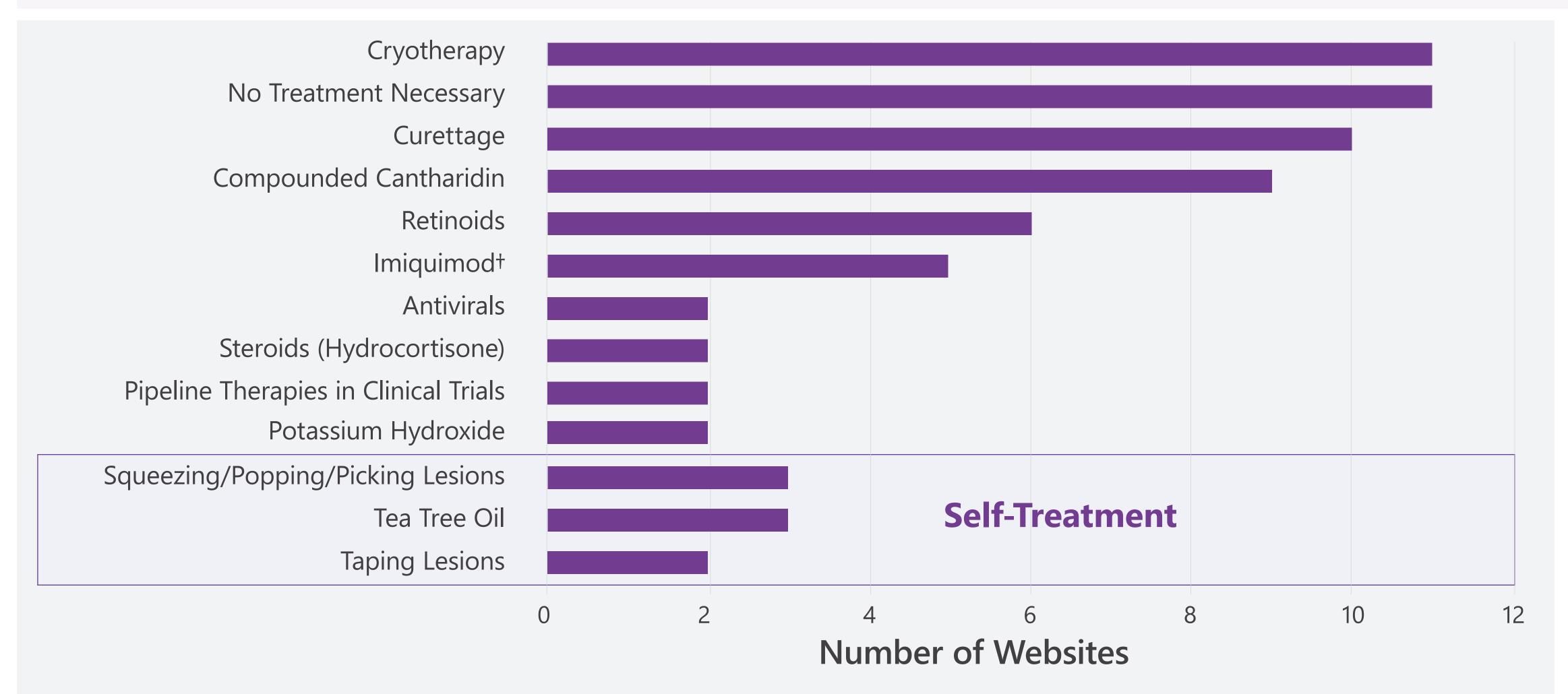
* Website stated various incubation periods including 1–6 months; between 2–7 weeks, and up to 6 months.

Infection Duration



Note: one website described duration differently throughout and was not included in this figure. * Website stated that most cases resolve within 6-9 months, while some persist for 3-4 years, and also that spontaneous resolution occurred for most patients by 18 months, although it could take up to 5 years. † Website stated that most infections heal without intervention in 6–12 months, but may take up to 4 years. * Website stated that lesions may last for a few months or years, but that the average duration is 6–9 months.

Treatment Methods Mentioned on Websites



* Two websites did not mention specific treatment options; † Two websites mentioned imiquimod, but did not recommend.

CONCLUSIONS

- Information about molluscum contagiosum available on frequently visited informational websites was found to be highly variable in quantity and quality when compared to published literature.
- Most websites included treatment recommendations without clinical evidence of safety or efficacy from well-controlled studies.
- Preventative measures included tactics not included in published literature, including some that can cause spread of the disease.
- Sites, and the consumers who visit them, may benefit from peer-review and from using published literature as source references.

References

- 1. Swire-Thompson Ann Rev Pub Health 2020.
- 2. Fallis D, Fricke M. J Amer Med Informatics Assoc 2002.

Disclosures

E Siegfried clinical trials, honoraria; S Ong clinical trials, J Andres Verrica employee, **C Crosby** Verrica employee, **M Olivadoti** Verrica employee.