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Title: Impact of allergy diagnosis on patients' perceptions and experience of HDM allergy: A European survey

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Body: Background: We assessed allergy awareness and diagnosis in a survey in four European countries. A post-hoc analysis determined the impact of diagnostic status on the perception of house dust mite (HDM) allergy and its management. Methods: 4016 adults (France: n=1001; Germany: n=1002; Italy: n=1004; Spain: n=1009) answered an anonymous, online, questionnaire on their perception and personal experience of HDM allergy. The results were analyzed according to whether the subjects had been diagnosed with HDM allergy by a physician (n=611) or not. Survey procedures complied with the ESOMAR International Code of Marketing and Social Research Practice. Results: 56% of the overall survey population stated that they experienced symptoms (repetitive sneezing, nasal discharge, stuffy nose, eye irritation and breathing difficulties). 15% had been diagnosed with HDM allergy and another 23% thought that they were allergic to HDMs but had not been diagnosed. Of the diagnosed patients, 47% presented year-round symptoms, 35% had seasonal symptoms and 14% rarely had symptoms. A high proportion of diagnosed patients considered that their symptoms were due to dust (66%) or indoor air pollution (27%), versus 66% for HDMs. 87% of diagnosed patients felt well informed, whereas 37% of the latter had not identified HDMs as the cause of their symptoms. Diagnosed patients appeared to be more aware that untreated HDM allergy can progress to asthma and that HDM allergy is difficult to treat. Conclusion: Physician-diagnosed HDM allergy patients had greater levels of awareness of HDM allergy and its management than non-diagnosed patients. However, some topics need to be reinforced through health education measures.