Spanish Dermatological Vocabulary Used by Mexican Workers

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Abstract:
Spanish is the second most common language spoken in the United States. Physicians can expect a growing population of patients who speak Spanish as their primary language. The purpose of this study was to develop a glossary of Spanish dermatological vocabulary commonly used by Mexican workers. Dermatologic terms were gathered from transcripts of in-depth interviews with 31 Latino farmworkers in North Carolina. Participants were asked to name and define words related to skin irritations. Farmworkers provided several definitions of some terms, and several Spanish equivalents exist for specific English words. This glossary is a supplement to other resources for learning medical Spanish and expands health care professionals' knowledge of dermatology-related Spanish vocabulary.

Article:
Introduction
Spanish is the second most common language spoken in the United States. Over 28 million people reported speaking Spanish in the 2000 Census, while the number of people who reported speaking languages other than Spanish or English totaled only 19 million [1]. Based on data from the 2002 National Center for Health Statistics' National Ambulatory Medical Care Survey [2], we estimate that there were 68 million visits of Hispanic or Latino patients to office-based U.S. physicians. In 2004, 61.4% of employed Hispanics/Latinos in the U.S. worked in agriculture, manufacturing, construction and service industries [3]. Workers in these industries are routinely exposed to risk factors for a variety of skin diseases [4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13]. As more Latino workers are affected by skin problems, it will become more common for physicians to have patients with dermatological complaints who speak Spanish as their primary language.

Physicians have implemented strategies for improving communication with their Spanish-speaking patients. Nearly 40 years ago, Martinez [14] provided a standard interview that physicians who knew very little or no Spanish could use to obtain a history from their patients. Recently, in addition to utilizing trained bilingual interpreters, more physicians and other health care providers have begun to learn Spanish. The purpose of this paper is to enhance the capacity of health care professionals to communicate with their Spanish-speaking clients by providing an expanded glossary of Spanish words that are commonly used by people from Mexico to name and describe signs, symptoms and treatment of skin diseases.

The focus on terms commonly used in Mexico is a strength of this study in light of the size and rapid growth rate of the Mexican-born population in the United States. Mexicans in the U.S. numbered over 11 million in 2004, and they currently make up 32% of the foreign-born population [15]. In addition, the average annual growth rate of the Mexican population in the U.S. has held steady at 8% for more than three decades [15]. Regional variations in the dialect of Spanish that people speak exist both between and within countries in the Americas and the Caribbean [16, 17] While people from different regions are able to converse freely with one another, regional differences in Spanish can result in specific words that are used in some regions but not
others. With the growth in the number of Mexican workers in the U.S., it is useful to consider the specific words this population uses.

**Methods**
The terms that are listed in this paper were collected from a set of 31 in-depth interviews about occupational skin disease that were conducted with Latino farmworkers in North Carolina. One purpose of the in-depth interviews was to elicit common terms used to refer to skin irritations. When interviewers heard new words or heard familiar words used in a new way, respondents were asked to define and differentiate the terms. All participants were from Mexico and spoke Spanish fluently. Three participants spoke the indigenous languages Mixteco and Tarasco and spoke Spanish as a second language. Interviews were conducted in Spanish by trained bilingual interviewers fluent in Spanish. All interviews were tape recorded and were then transcribed verbatim and translated by a professional translator. Translated transcripts were reviewed for accuracy by the interviewer. In the English versions of the transcripts, Spanish dermatology-related words were left in parentheses next to their English equivalents. Members of the research team read the transcripts and highlighted important dermatological terms. The highlighted terms were compiled to create a glossary of common dermatological terms.

**Results**
Below is a glossary of Spanish words with their English equivalents. Parts of speech (noun, verb or adjective) are indicated. The glossary is organized into the following categories: skin-related anatomy, signs and symptoms of skin disease, terms used to describe skin irritations, names of specific skin conditions, and treatment-related terms. The last section in the glossary is a list of English words for which three or more Spanish equivalents were used in the interviews. (PDF version for printing)

**Skin-related Anatomy**
capa, la (de la piel)  
(n.)= layer (of skin)
cutis, el  
(n.)= skin
piel, la  
(n.)= skin
pliegue, el (de la piel)  
(n.)= fold (of skin)
poro, el  
(n.)= pore
raíz, la  
(del pelo) (n.)= root (of hair)

**Signs and Symptoms of Skin Disease**
abertura, la  
(n.)= cut or crack
abierto  
(adj.)= cracked open
abrirse  
(v.)= to break open or to crack
agrietado  
(adj.)= cracked
agrietarse  
(v.)= to crack
agua/aguita, el  
(n.)= clear liquid that oozes from a skin irritation, serous liquid
ampolla, la
(n.) = blister
ámpula, la
(n.) = sore or blister (The definition of ámpula varies by region in Mexico.)
arder
(v.) = to have a burning sensation
ardor/ardorcito, el
(n.) = burning sensation
arruga, la
(n.) = wrinkle
barro/barrito, el
(n.) = pimple, pustule
blanda
(adj.) = tender
bola/bolita, la
(n.) = bump or blister
bolota/borota, la
(n.) = blister
bolsita, la
(n.) = blister
bomba, la
(n.) = blister
caerse el cuero/cuerito
(v.) = to peel
caerse el pellejito
(v.) = to peel
caida del cabello, la
(n.) = hair loss
caida del pelo, la
(n.) = hair loss
calvicie, la
(n.) = baldness
calvo
(adj.) = bald
cambio de color de las uñas, el
= nail change
carrapellar
(v.) = to peel
carne viva, la
(n.) = raw flesh
caspa, la
(n.) = dandruff
cicatriz, la
(n.) = scar
clacote, el
(n.) = large pus bump
colorada
(adj.) = red
comer
(v.) = to itch
comezón, la
(n.) = itchiness
cortada/cortadita, la
(n.)= cut
cortadura, la
(n.)= cut
costa, la
(n.)= scab
costroso/costrudo
(adj.)= scabby or crusty
cuartear
(v.)= to crack
descamación, la
(n.)= peeling
despellejarse
(v.)= to peel
desprenderse
(v.)= to flake off
enrojecimiento, el
(n.)= redness
erupción, la
(n.)= pustule
escaldarse
(v.)= to chafe
e scama, la
(n.)= flakes or scale
escamación, la
(n.)= flakiness or scaliness
escozor, el
(n.)= itchiness or burning
espesamiento/espesor, el
(n.)= thickening
espinilla, la
(n.)= pustule, pimple
globo, el
(n.)= blister
granos/granitos, los
(n.)= bumps, pustules
grano enterrado, el
(n.)= large pus bump
grieta, la
(n.)= crack
hacerse alta
(v.)= to swell
hacerse cortaditas
(v.)= to cut oneself
hendidura, la
(n.)= crack
herida, la
(n.)= wound
hinchado
(adj.)= swollen
hincharse
(v.)= to swell
hormigueo, el
itchiness

hoyo, el

pockmark

infección, la

infection

inflamado

swollen

inflamarse

to swell

irritación, la

irritation

levantarse los pellejitos

to peel

lunar, el

mole or birthmark

llaga, la

sore or blister

machucón, el

bruise

marcado

marked

(by pigment change), scarred

mancha blanca, la

light spot, hypopigmentation

mancha oscura, la

dark spot, hyperpigmentation

mancha roja, la

red spot, hives

mordedura, la

bite

moretón, el

bruise

nacido, el

large pus bump

parche, el

patch

partido

cracked

partidura, la

cut

partirse

to crack

pelarse

to peel

pérdida de pigmentación, la

loss of pigmentation

perilla, la

stye

picadura, la

sting

(from insect)

picarse
(v.)= to itch
picazón, la
(n.)= itchiness
piel de lagarto, la
(n.)= a term used in some regions of Mexico to refer to thickened skin, means lizard skin
plasta de granos, la
(n.)= dense patch of bumps
puntito, el
(n.)= small bump, the head of a pustule
pus, el
(n.)= pus
quemarse
(v.)= to burn oneself
quemazón, el
(n.)= burning sensation
raja, la
(n.)= crack
rajadura, la
(n.)= cut
rajar
(v.)= to crack
rasgar
(v.)= to cut
rasgo, el
(n.)= cut
rasguño, el
(n.)= scratch
raspadura, la
(n.)= scratch or scrape
raspar
(v.)= to scratch or scrape
raspón, el
(n.)= scratch
rasquera, la
(n.)= itchiness
reseca
(adj.)= dry
resequeidad, la
(n.)= dryness
roletito, el
(n.)= row
(of bumps or blisters)
ronchas/ronchitas, las
(n.)= bumps, hives, a rash consisting of large swollen bumps
roña/roñita, la
(n.)= bump, rash, or scab
rosada
(adj.)= pink
rotura, la
(n.)= cut or crack
rozadura, la
(n.)= chafing or mild abrasions
Terms Used to Describe Skin Irritations

rozarse
(v.)= to chafe
salpullido/sarpullido, el
(n.)= rash consisting of many small bumps
sarna, la
(n.)= rash
(in medical Spanish, refers to scabies, but some laypersons use the term to refer to rashes in general)
sensible
(adj.)= tender
tiesa
(adj.)= thick
torta de granos, la
(n.)= dense patch of bumps
vejiga/vejiguilla, la
(n.)= blister
Vivo
(adj.)= raw
(top layer of epidermis has been scratched away)
curarse
(v.) = to heal, to be cured
cutánea
(adj.) = cutaneous
chiquilla/chiquita
(adj.) = small
durar
(v.) = to last (as in length of duration)
enconarse
(v.) = to become infected
enronchado
(adj.) = broken out in a rash
enroñarse
(v.) = to break out in a rash or bumps
escamosa
(adj.) = flaky or scaly
exprimir
(v.) = to burst
(a pustule or vesicle) by squeezing
extripar
(v.) = to burst
(a pustule or vesicle)
fuerte
(adj.) = severe
grande
(adj.) = large
grave
(adj.) = severe, serious
infectada
(adj.) = infected
infectarse
(v.) = to contract an infectious disease
ir bajando
(v.) = to spread to deeper layers of the epidermis or dermis
ir corcomiendo
(v.) = to spread (to cover a larger area of skin)
ir extendiendose
(v.) = to spread (to cover a larger area of skin)
ir más adentro
(v.) = to spread to deeper layers of the epidermis or dermis
ir profundizando
(v.) = to spread to deeper layers of the epidermis or dermis
ir sumiendo
(v.) = to spread to deeper layers of the epidermis or dermis
juntas/juntos
(adj.) = close together (describes spacing of bumps)
leve
(adj.) = mild
muy mal
(adj.) = very bad, severe
parejo/parejito
(adj.) = dense (describes spacing of bumps)
pequeño
(adj.)= small
permanecer
(v.)= to last
(as in length of duration)
pocos
(adj.)= few (a description of the number of bumps a person has)
marcado
(adj.)= scarred, permanently marked (color change)
queemarse
(v.)= to heal, to go away
quitarse
(v.)= to heal, to go away
rasposa
(adj.)= rough
rebrotar
(v.)= to recur or reemerge
regarse
(v.)= to spread (to cover a larger area of skin)
relleno
(adj.)= covered over a large area (by a skin problem)
retirarse
(v.)= to heal, to go away
reventarse
(v.)= to break open (as in a blister)
rojo
(adj.)= red
salir
(v.)= to begin, to come out, to appear (beginning of a skin symptom)
secarse
(v.)= to heal
separados
(adj.)= widely or sparsely spaced
tupida/tupidita
(adj.)= dense, closely spaced (used to describe spacing of bumps)
uno que otro en medio
(adj.)= widely or sparsely spaced
volver a brotar
(v.)= to recur
volver a resaltar
(v.)= to recur

Names of Specific Skin Conditions
acné, el
(n.)= acne
callo, el
(n.)= callus
cancer de la piel, el
(n.)= skin cancer
evermpeine
(n.)= impetigo (Empeine is also used to refer to round scaly patches consistent with tinea corporis.)
hiedra, la/granos de la hiedra
poison ivy
any type of fungal infection
hypopigmentation or vitiligo
wart
hang nail
dark spot, hyperpigmentation, often on the face
athlete's foot
sunburn
burn
heat rash
rubella
measles
heat rash/miliaria
hypopigmentation (consistent with tinea versicolor)
ingrown toenail
ingrown toenail
chicken pox/varicela
wart

Treatment-related Terms
cream
cream
to cure
lotion
lotion
medicine
medicine (oral)
iodine
pill
burst (a pustule or vesicle)

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Eng\n\nlish words with three or more Spanish equivalents

bumps
(n.) = bolitas, granos/ granitos, punititos, ronchas/ ronchitas, roñas/ roñitas
burst (a blister)
(v.) = exprimir, extripar, pellizcar, reventar

\n crack, fissure
(n.) = abertura, cortadita, grieta, hendidura, raja, rotura

\n crack
(v.) = abrirse, agrietarse, cuartear, hacerse cortaditas, partirse, rajar

\n cracked
(adj.) = agrietado, partido, abierto

\n cut
(n.) = abertura, cortada, cortadura, partidura, rajadura, rasgo

\n heal/go away/get better
(v.) = acabarse, aliviarse, apagarse, borrarse, cerrar, cicatrizar, componerse, controlarse, curarse, desbaratarse, perderse, quemarse, quitarse, retirarse

\n itchiness
(n.) = comezón, escozor, hormigueo, pica pica, picazón, rascadera, rasquera

\n light spot, hypopigmentation
(n.) = jiricua, mal de pinto, mancha blanca, pérdida de pigmentación, pinto

\n path, band or row (of bumps)
(n.) = brecha, camino, roletito, venda, veredita, zurquito

\n peel
(v.) = caer el pellejito, caerse el cuero/cuerito, carrapeler, despellejarse, levantarse los pellejitos, pelarse

\n pimples, pustules
(n.) = acné, barros/barritos, espinillas, granos

\n pus bump
(n.) = clacote, grano con pus, grano enterrado, nacido

\n rash (consisting of small bumps)
(n.) = salpullido, sarapullido, sarna

\n rash (consisting of large swollen bumps), hives
(n.) = ronchas/ ronchitas, roñitas

\n return/recur (a skin condition)
(v.) = rebrotar, volver a brotar, volver a resaltar
scrape, scratch
(n.)= rasguño, raspadura/raspadurita, raspón
spaced far apart
(adj.)= adistanciadas, separados, uno que esto, uno que otro en medio
spread to cover larger area of skin
(v.)= correrse, ir corcomiendo, ir extendiéndose, mancharse, regarse
spread to deeper layers of dermis
(v.)= ir bajando, ir más adentro, ir profundizando, ir sumiendo
swell
(v.)= hacerse alta, hincharse, inflamarse, ir inflamando
vesicle, blister
(n.)= ampolla, bola/bolita, bolsita, bolota/borota, bomba, botita de agua, globo, grano transparente, llaga, vejiga, vejiguilla/vejiguita

Conclusions
The vocabulary from the present study adds to the limited existing literature on dermatological Spanish [14]. Some of the definitions listed in this glossary may differ from those encountered in a common dictionary; this is because we have listed terms as they were defined by the informants with whom we spoke. While many of the terms in the glossary are used in most Spanish-speaking countries, it also includes terms that are specific to Mexico or certain regions of Mexico.

Although all of our interview participants spoke Spanish and were of Mexican origin, they did not all use the same terminology when referring to or discussing skin disease. For example, the words ronchas, salpullidos/sarpullidos, sarna and roñas all refer to a rash. Some people distinguish between the various terms based on the size and spacing of the bumps that make up the rash; others make no distinction. One person may explain that ronchas refers to a group of large swollen bumps that are sparsely spaced and salpullidos/sarpullidos refers to small bumps that are densely spaced whereas another person will explain that there is no difference between ronchas and salpullidos/sarpullidos. It is not uncommon for people to have conflicting beliefs about the differences between nearly equivalent terms. It may, therefore, be necessary to ask patients for further explanation of a term in order to learn how they define the word. Health care professionals should be prepared to use more than one equivalent term when taking a patient history and should expect to occasionally hear new terms to name a concept for which they already know one or more Spanish equivalents.

Limitations
The glossary in this paper is not a complete or exhaustive list of dermatological Spanish vocabulary. The list is limited to the terms that were extracted from interviews with 31 Latino farmworkers in North Carolina. It is likely that additional common dermatological terms or equivalents to the terms listed exist that were not elicited during these interviews. Other sources such as dictionaries and textbooks may include additional terms. Although many of the terms listed are used in Spanish-speaking countries other than Mexico, a number of the terms are probably specific to Mexico. Some of the terms may be used only in specific regions of Mexico. For example, several participants described a pus bump that must be squeezed to remove the "root" in order for the bump to heal. Most people used the name nacido for such a bump, but several people called it a clacote. These words are examples of terms that differ between the Spanish dialects that exist in Mexico. Spanish-speaking people from other regions of Mexico or other nations may have never heard certain words from this glossary or may define the words differently from the way in which they are defined here. Despite these limitations, this glossary will assist those who are interested in dermatological Spanish terminology in expanding their vocabulary.

References
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