

## Materials and Methods

We performed a cross-sectional study of all patients attending the emergency consultation in our secondary referral center with a cutaneous problem during a 7-month period (December 1, 2016, to June 30, 2017). The study included all consecutive patients of all ages and sex who sought an immediate dermatological consultation as emergency as well as a group of control patients who attended a scheduled visit at our secondary referral center during the same period. There were no exclusion criteria unless the patient refused to participate.

The Cantonal Ethics Committee of Ticino approved the study. All patients gave written informed consent prior to inclusion.

### *Hospital Setting*

Our secondary referral hospital provides specialized dermatological care to a population of approximately 350,000 inhabitants in Cantone Ticino, in southern Switzerland (354,375 registered inhabitants on December 31, 2016, of whom 172,877 men and 181,498 women). The Department of Dermatology has 6 inpatient beds, a day care unit and an outpatient consultation composed of 2 different sectors. The first one includes regular consultations for which patients have a scheduled appointment, whereas the second sector provides emergency consultations with immediate unscheduled appointments. Patients consulting with a dermatological condition in the ED outside the normal working hours are per arrangement invariably evaluated by a dermatological consultant and have been included per definition and analysis as emergency dermatological cases.

### *Collected Data*

For the purpose of this study we collected information on: date/day of visit, gender, age, smoking and drinking habits, whether the patient came directly to our emergency consultation without referral (spontaneously or through the ED) or was referred by a primary care physician or other specialist, duration of symptoms, diagnosis, need for hospitalization and need for a follow-up visit.

We also collected general information and demographics, including date/day of visit, gender, age and diagnosis, of patients attending scheduled visits in our outpatient dermatological center.

### *Statistical Analysis*

For descriptive purposes continuous data were presented as means with standard deviations (SD) and ranges, while categorical data were given as numbers with percentages. Two-sample  $t$  test and Pearson's  $\chi^2$  test were used, respectively, to assess differences in the distribution of continuous and categorical variables between patients attending emergency consultation and controls. All tests were considered statistically significant at  $p < 0.05$ . Analyses were performed by using Matlab software v. 9.2 (The MathWorks Inc., Natick, USA).