

## **Abstract**

Patients are increasingly assuming the role of lay ‘experts,’ driven by evolving desires towards autonomy, the omnipresence of the Internet, and other factors, leading to an influx of self-diagnosis and self-treatment. While patient expertise has been of ongoing study, dermatology has received less attention, despite the high grounds for patient involvement, given the visually-bound nature of many dermatological conditions and the reliance on heuristics and patient-reported data in its clinical practice.

By drawing on theoretical and empirical literature on *diagnosis*, *doctor-patient relationships*, and *‘expert’ patients*, this thesis explores how patients construct dermatological concerns with respect to various diagnostic pathways, dermatological conditions, and the types of knowledge sources mobilized in this process. Twelve semi-structured interviews were conducted with individuals diagnosed with a dermatological condition either by doctors or themselves. A combined thematic analysis and grounded theory methodological framework was used to analyze the data, producing themes and a paradigm model.

Findings suggest that dermatological concerns, along with the medical practice, industry, and dermatologists, were often understood in an aesthetic orientation that extend “beyond” mere health towards bodily enhancements and consumerism. Despite this, participants addressed their dermatological concerns by combining biomedical and alternative approaches and were found to be the primary agents of diagnosis. The discussion discusses various explanations, including the quasi-medicalization and simultaneous aestheticization of dermatology.