



Hell's Itch

Katelin Ball, OMS II, Brandon Muse, OMSII, Bailey Cook, OMS III, Benjamin Brooks, PhD

INTRODUCTION

Hell's Itch (HI) is a condition characterized by severe itch and pain experienced days after a sunburn, often triggered by showering, that typically gets worse with most topical sunburn treatments.¹ The condition is widely unknown to the medical community with only three peer-reviewed articles published to date, yet a Google search of this condition yields hundreds of thousands of results.¹⁻³ Our lack of understanding of HI leaves most afflicted individuals without medical treatment, causing them to resort to social media for guidance, leaving anecdotal data from these sites as the basis for our current understanding.¹⁻³ Valid and reliable data is an essential next step in strengthening our understanding of HI.

METHODS

- Survey designed to gather information regarding participants experiences with HI
- Distributed on social media sites specific for the condition

Survey Contents:

Basic Information

- Number of episodes
- Skin type

Episode Information

- Sunburn information
- Symptoms
- Treatments and effectiveness

Medical History

- Family history of Hell's Itch
- Specific medical conditions

Demographics

- Age
- Age during episodes
- Place of residence

PRELIMINARY RESULTS

Symptom/Treatment	Sunburn	Hell's Itch
Symptoms		
Erythema	+	+/-
Pruritis	+/- Mainly if skin peels	+ Severe
Pain	+ Mild/Moderate	+ Severe
Difficulty Sleeping	+/-	+
Paresthesia	-	+
Peeling skin	+/-	+/-
Treatments		
OTC Topical Sunburn Agents (calamine lotion, aloe vera, bland emollients)	Relief	Symptom Worsening
Topical Corticosteroids	Advised Against: No Benefit	Some Relief
NSAIDS	Relief	Slight Relief
Cool Bath	Relief	Symptom Worsening
Antihistamines	No Benefit	Some Relief

Figure 1: Sunburn vs. Hell's Itch^{1,2,4,5}

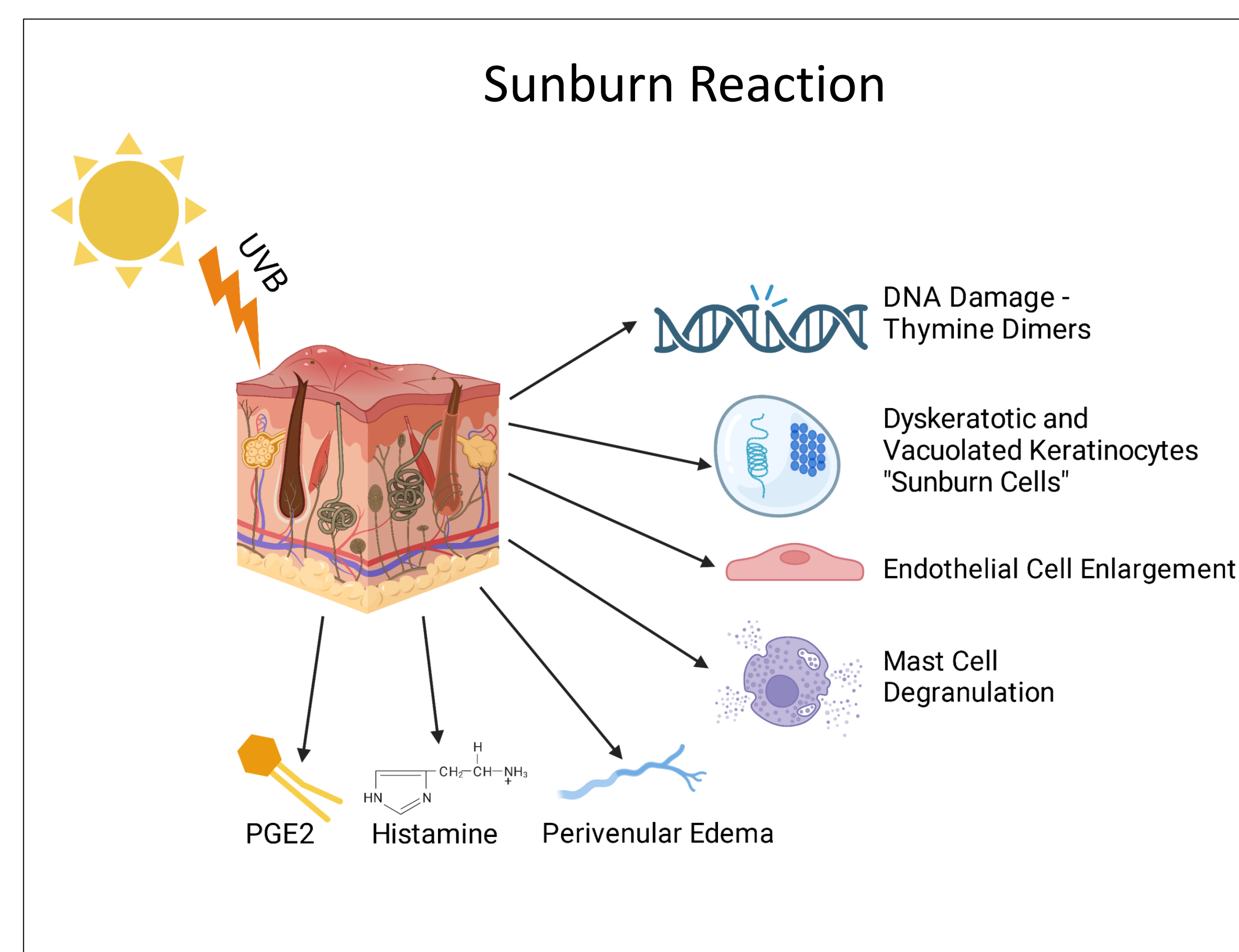


Figure 2: Sunburn Reaction^{6,7} (Created with BioRender.com)

QUOTES FROM HELL'S ITCH SUFFERERS

- "It was the first time in my life where not being alive genuinely sounded like a better option. I was exhausted, and had to learn to not fight it, but totally surrender to the torture."⁸
- "The itch takes away everything you enjoy about life, because all you can think about is the absolute torture that you're experiencing."⁸
- "I was nothing but a consciousness experiencing the sensation of hell on Earth."⁸
- "I have never experienced anything so painful that it made me contemplate taking my own life, but this was it."⁸

FUTURE DIRECTION

- Characterizing HI
- Establishing a difference from sunburn
- Determine what treatments are the most effective
- Explaining the pathophysiology
- Educating healthcare professionals

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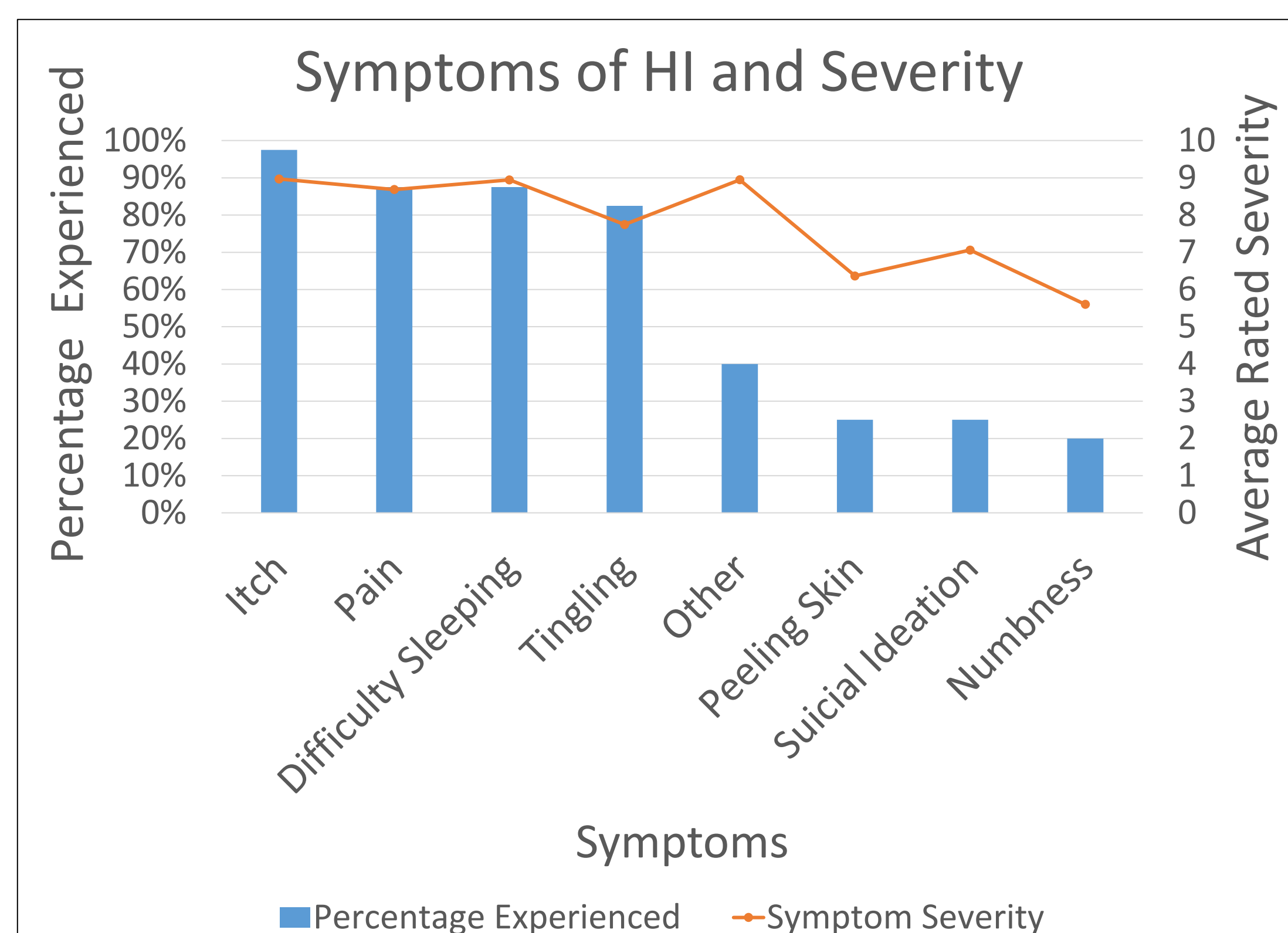


Figure 3: Symptoms of HI and Severity

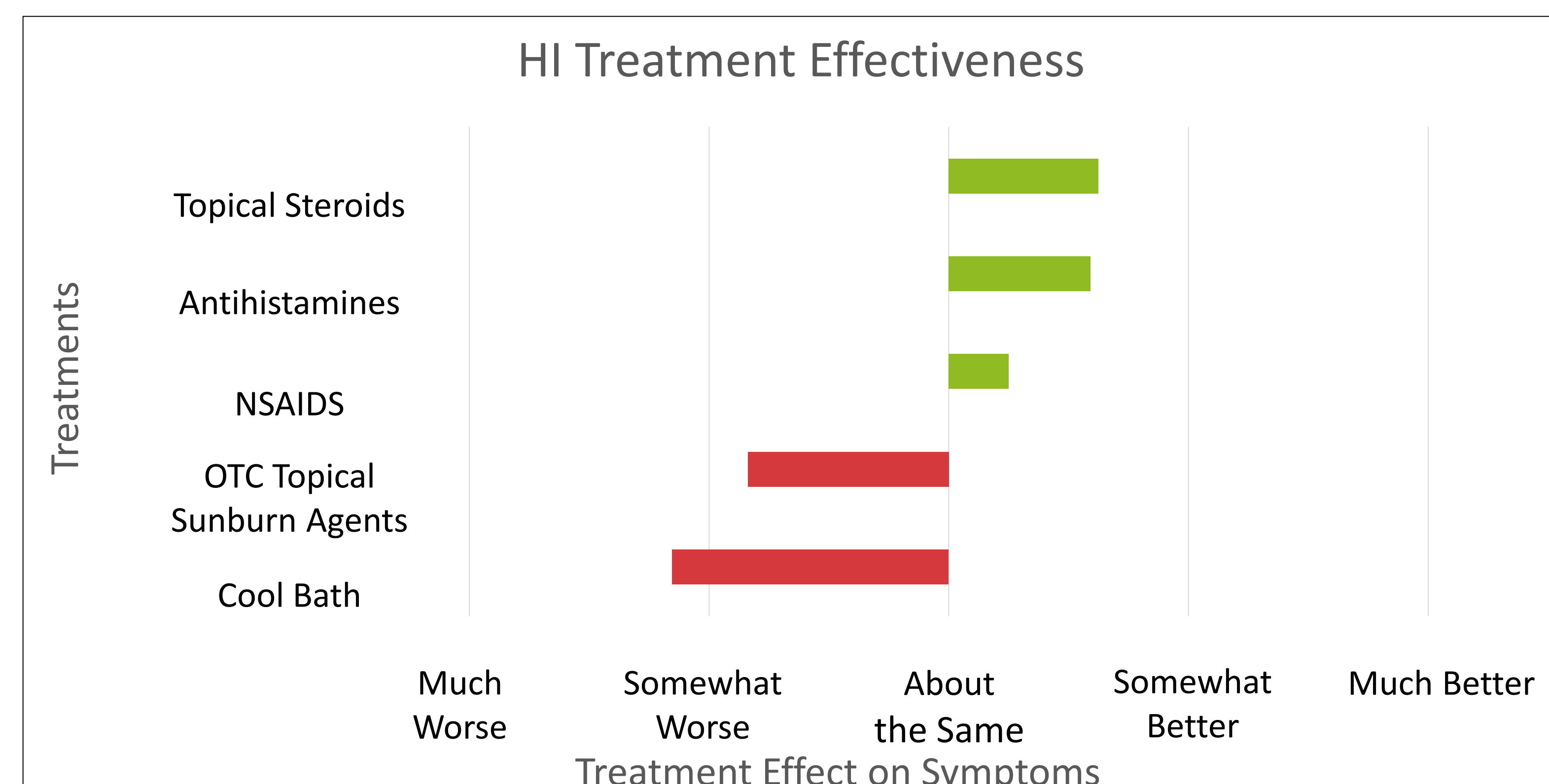


Figure 4: HI Treatments and Their Effectiveness on Symptom Relief