



BEHIND CLOSED DOORS:

THE EFFECTS OF CHILDHOOD CANCER ON SOMATIC HEALTH OF PARENTS DURING AND AFTER ONCOLOGIC THERAPY



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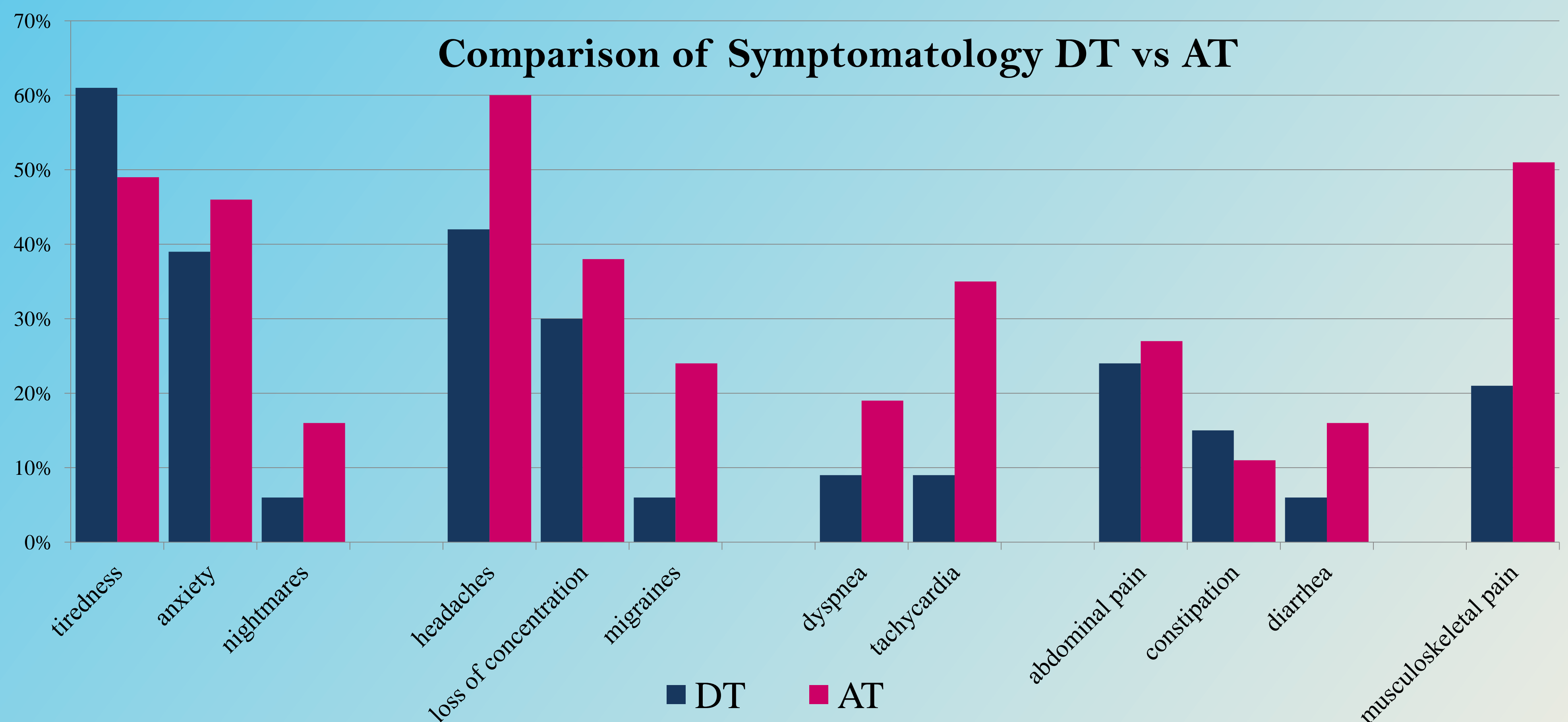
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BACKGROUND:

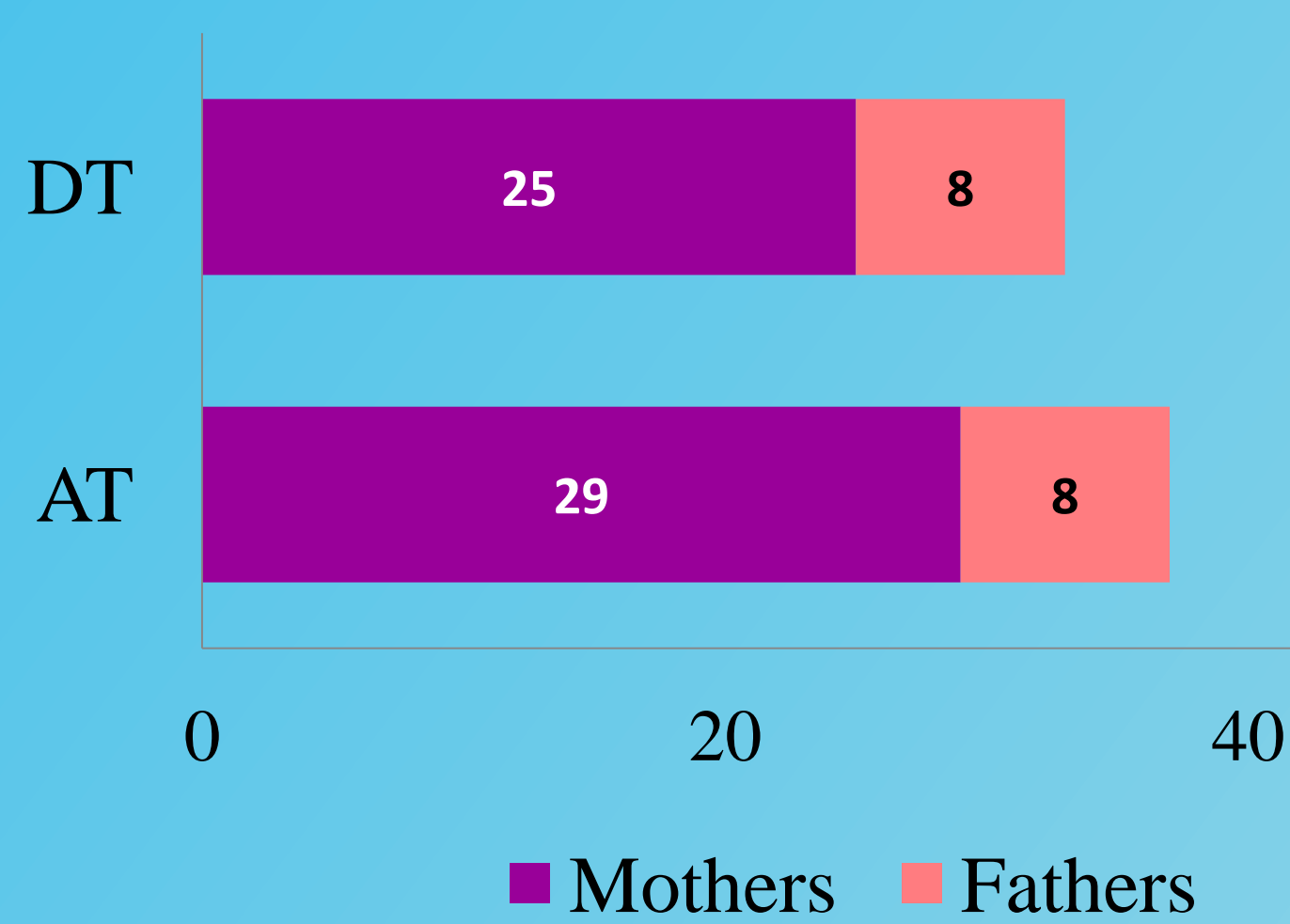
Though surviving childhood cancer is a triumph for child and family, the scars left on parents' health may linger long after treatment has been concluded.

AIM:

To analyze the impact of childhood cancer on somatic health of parents during treatment (DT – average 10.5 months since diagnosis) and after treatment (AT – average 31.9 months since diagnosis)



Gender Proportion of Study Participants



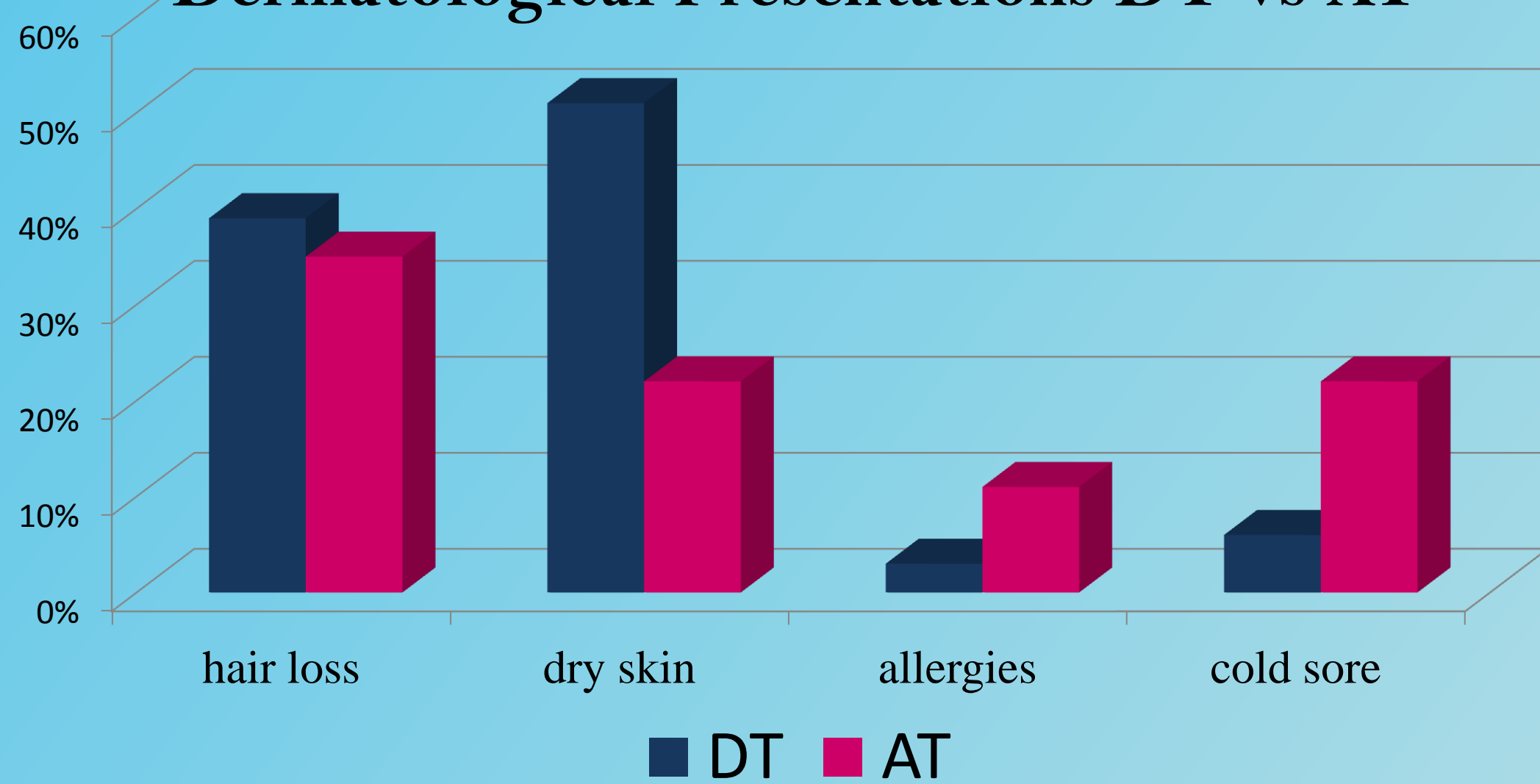
METHODS:

Analysis of 70 questionnaires (33 DT, 37 AT) from parents of cancer patients, treated at the Department of Pediatrics, Oncology and Hematology, Medical University of Gdansk, Poland, since 2011.

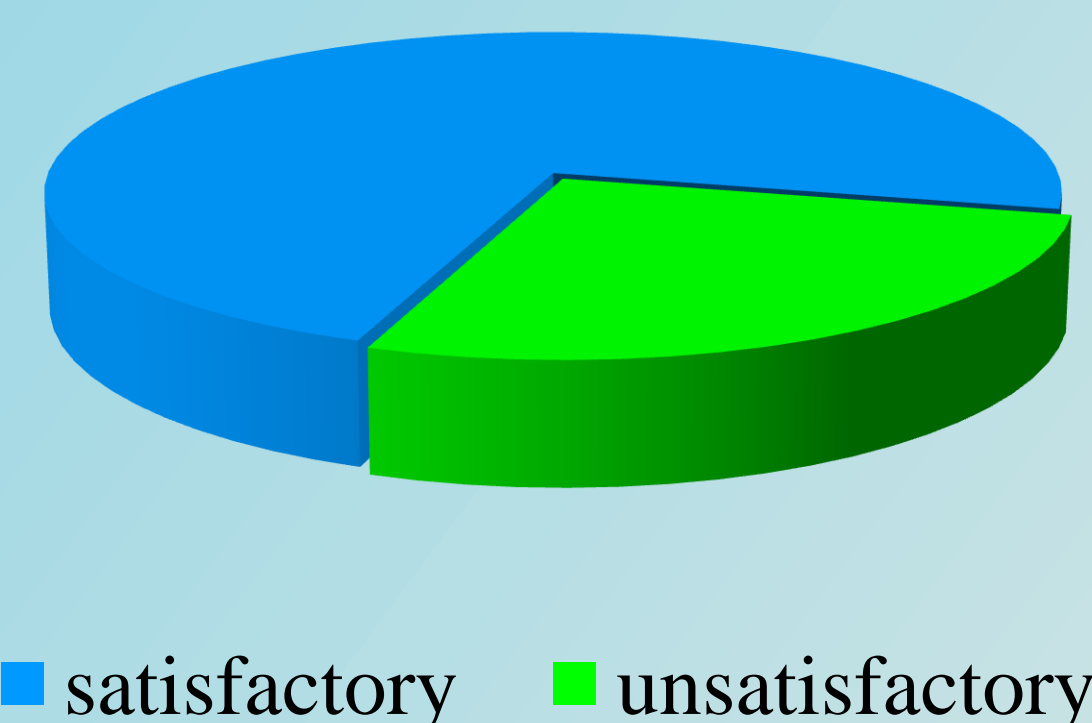
RESULTS:

- 70% DT - felt physically worse since diagnosis
- 52% DT – problems with falling asleep, waking up
- More AT (16%) experienced nightmares than DT
- More DT (60%) felt anxious and tired than AT (48%)
- Headaches, problems concentrating and migraines prevailed AT (59%, 38% and 24% respectively)
- Dermatological signs (hair loss, dry skin, cold sores) were common both DT and AT.
- 1 DT developed cancer.
- DT had increased caffeine, nicotine and alcohol consumption, weight changes and hypertension.
- 28% AT felt unhappy with their intimate relationship (vs. 9% DT).
- Two parents (1 DT, 1 AT) admitted to suicidal attempts.
- Less than 20% of parents consulted with psychiatrist.

Dermatological Presentations DT vs AT



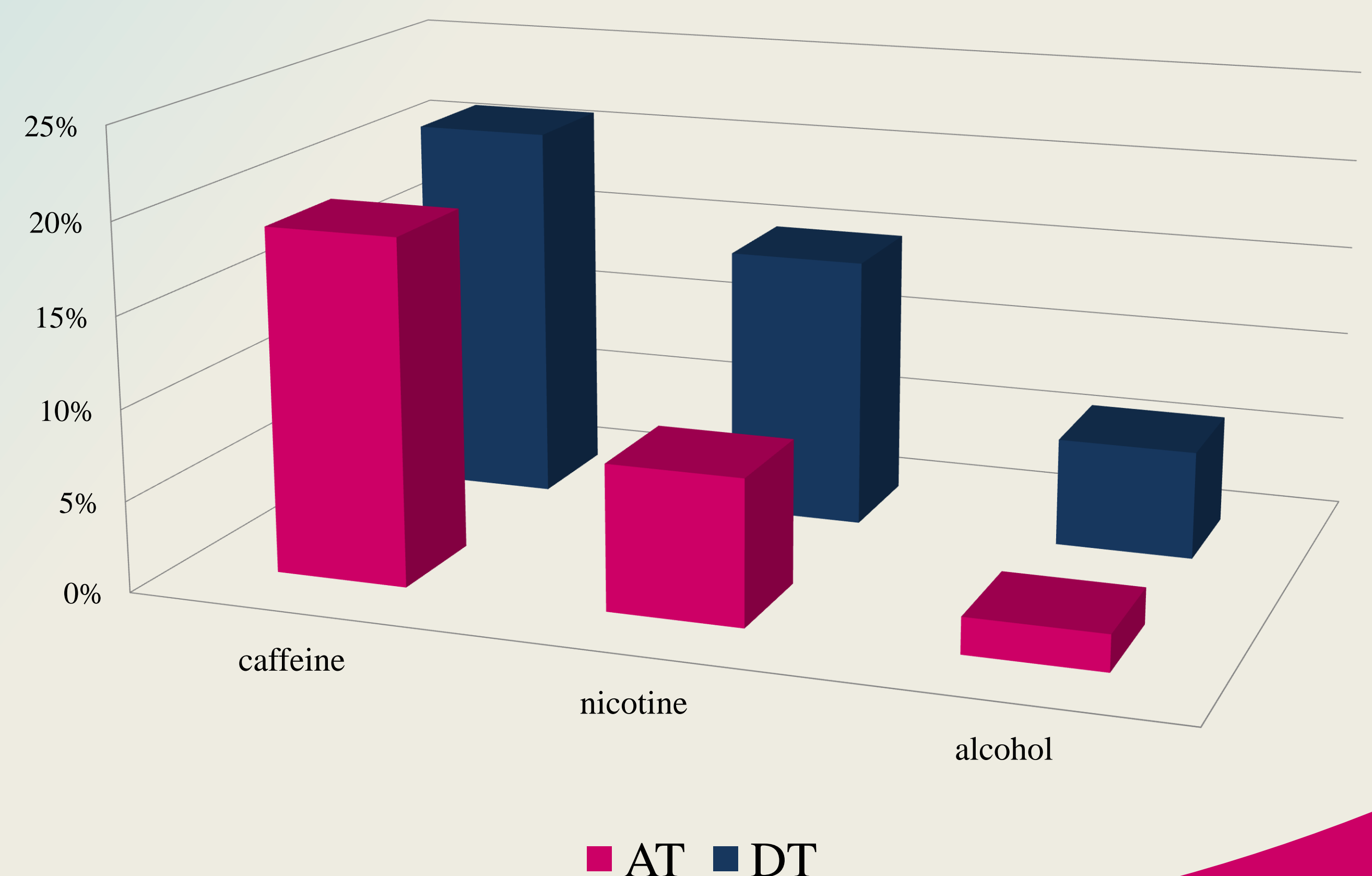
Intimate Life AT



▲ DT
WEIGHT GAIN
 Mothers: 7kg/person
 Fathers: 10kg/person
TOTAL: 69 kg (9 parents)

▼ AT
WEIGHT LOSS
 Mothers: 5.8kg/person
 Fathers: 12kg/person
TOTAL: 120 kg (16 parents)

Substance Use DT vs AT



CONCLUSION:

Diagnosis of cancer in a child leaves devastating somatic sequelae in parents, affecting all systems and life activities. Interestingly, parents AT report somatic complications more often than those DT. Medical assistance should be promoted for parents of cancer children even after the termination of oncologic therapy.