

Rising Incidence of Skin Cancer

Non-melanoma skin cancer is the most common malignancy in the United States with substantial associated morbidity and cost, as well as relatively small but significant mortality. The total number of procedures for skin cancer in the over 65 year old group increased by 13% from 2,048,517 in 2006 to 2,321,058 in 2012. The number of surgical procedures increased by 14% from 1,918,340 in 2006 to 2,191,100 in 2012. The number of persons with at least one surgical procedure increased 14% (from 1,177,618 to 1,336,800) from 2006 through 2012. The number of skin cancers in the overall US population was estimated in 2012 at 5,434,193.

There are very significant costs associated with the treatment of skin cancer. Skin cancer is the fifth most costly malignancy to treat in the United States. A recent report estimates the average annual cost of treating skin cancer in the United States at \$4.8 billion from 2007 to 2011, which increased 74% since the 2002-2006 estimate. This study provides evidence of continued increases in numbers and costs of skin cancer diagnoses in the United States. The public health ramifications of increased US skin cancer incidence levels has been acknowledged by the federal government with the release of the "US Surgeon General's Call to Action to Prevent Skin Cancer". *The Surgeon General's Call to Action to Prevent Skin Cancer* focuses on UV radiation because it is the most preventable cause of skin cancer. Genetic factors, such as being fair-skinned or having a family history of skin cancer, also increase a person's risk. But the most common types of skin cancer are strongly associated with exposure to UV radiation.

Editorial: The article describes a very large increase in the incidence of skin cancer over a very short time period. The article does not draw a conclusion about whether the increase is related to our national trends for sunbathing and tanning or whether it is related to holes in the ozone letting in more UV radiation. The advice provided is to avoid excessive exposure to harmful UV radiation. Avoiding sunburns, using protective clothing and shades, sunblock and any other method that shields you from the sun all have value in reducing exposure. The sun is important for Vitamin D production and many other things, but too much of a good thing can be harmful.

Bibliography

Howard W. Rogers, MD, PhD¹; Martin A. Weinstock, MD, PhD^{2,3,4,5}; Steven R. Feldman, MD, PhD⁶; Brett M. Coldiron, MD⁷

¹Advanced Dermatology, Norwich, Connecticut

²Department of Dermatology, Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island

³Department of Epidemiology, Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island

⁴Center for Dermatoepidemiology, VA Medical Center, Providence, Rhode Island

⁵Department of Dermatology Rhode Island Hospital, Providence, Rhode Island

⁶Department of Dermatology, Wake Forest University School of Medicine, Winston-Salem, North Carolina

⁷Department of Dermatology, University of Cincinnati Hospital, Cincinnati, Ohio

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