

The importance to promote skin awareness and self-examination to detect early cutaneous melanoma

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INTRODUCTION

The incidence of melanoma is increasing faster than almost every other form of cancer. Self-screening is important because self-detection by patients, spouses, and families is the most common way skin cancer is currently detected. Secondary prevention refers to establishing an early diagnosis to reduce morbidity and mortality; in fact malignant melanoma has a high chance for cure if detected in a early phase of development.

PURPOSE/METHODS

Our program is a health education program that aim to teach adult affected by melanoma and their family how to protect themselves from overexposure to the sun and how recognize pigmented skin lesions. The pre-clinical phase may identify the kind of intervention needed and study design. Selected patients will complete a simple take-home survey to identify their current sun safety practices and how they know about melanoma. The pilot program started in January 2010 and will conclude in December 2014.

EXPECTED RESULTS

We want to teach patients to recognize pigmented skin lesions and encourage to examine themselves, including difficult to-see anatomic sites with assistance from friends and relatives to detect evolving tumors. Through the program, these patients will increase their awareness of simple steps related to sun protection and self-examination. However, given the public's confusion about what constitutes skin cancer, educational materials will need to continue to detail the easily recognizable features of melanoma.

CONCLUSION

Patients must recognize the lesions that may already be evolving melanoma: a new nevus pigmented or not; a pre-existing nevus that has changed color; a pre-existing nevus that has a changed surface; a pre-existing nevus that has changed its margins; an unusual, or ugly nevus that stands out from all the rest; a nevus that is persistently itching, tender, or bleeding. Self-examination and skin awareness are central to any intervention program that attempts to reduce skin cancer morbidity and mortality.

References

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