

Skin cancer



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Skin Cancer Prior to addressing the variety of issues associated with occurrences of skin cancer, it is important to put parameters around the definition to establish a frame of reference. According to the National Cancer Institute, " skin cancer is a disease in which cancer (malignant) cells are found in the outer layers of your skin" (National Cancer Institute, 2008). The outer layers of the skin are called the epidermis and are comprised of three types of cells, basal cells, squamous cells, and melanocyte cells. Cancer can occur in any of these types of cells, but the most serious occurrences are in the melanocyte cells. This disease occurs more often in people with light colored skin who are exposed to the sun for significant periods of time. The occurrences are most likely in the skin that has the most sun exposure (e. g. hands, head, neck, face, arms, or exposed legs), but it can also occur on nearly any skin surface, so periodic self examination is critical for early detection (National Cancer Institute, 2008).

Skin cancer concerns are being addressed by many agencies and community initiatives. One excellent example is represented by the Comprehensive Cancer Program in Columbus, Ohio. Healthy People 2010 Cancer-Related Objectives are targeted to reduce the overall cancer death rate from melanoma cancer by 7%, to 2. 5 deaths in 1000 population (Healthy Ohioans, 2008). The achievement of this objective is contingent upon education and increased doctor visits for appropriate screening, Epidemiological trends or the incidence rate and subsequent control of this disease has decreased in recent years but has remained on the upswing worldwide, and specifically in Western countries. This is most likely due to the fact that the incidence and the death rate of persons that have cutaneous melanoma, has increased significantly in most fair-skinned

populations throughout the world (British Journal of Dermatology, 2004).

Contributing factors include environmental such as climates with significant sun exposure, and genetic predisposition including light skin.

Pathogenesis or the origin of skin cancer is nearly always from long exposure to Ultraviolet light. Ultraviolet light is electromagnetic radiation that is shorter than visible light but longer than x-rays, and is contained in the sunlight (Merriam-Webster's collegiate dictionary, 2003). It most often is known by the color of the skin or sunburn that one would receive in unprotected exposure to the sun. Many doctors believe that despite skin tone and limited exposure, sensitive areas of the body should be protected at all times, such as the face and arms and especially the lips and nose.

Nearly 1 out of 7 people in the United States may develop skin cancer in their lifetime. Treatment for this disease is most effective when it is diagnosed and treated as early possible (Center for Disease Control, 2008).

Specific treatment is dependent on the type of cancer, the size of the affected area, and the location. Surgical options are typically outpatient, and include a variety of applications freezing, laser treatment, radiation treatment, and even chemotherapy, depending on the severity.

Public health prevention strategies are widespread from local, state, and federal agencies, to personal doctors and regional health care facilities. For example, the Center for Disease Control has an aggressive program to deal with skin cancer prevention including public awareness campaigns to cover up, seek shade, and use sun screen. Additionally, they work with other agencies to distribute publications and other training material, and they support continuing research in the prevention and identification of skin cancer indicators (Center for Disease Control, 2008).

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