Study progress update

As we mentioned in our last newsletter, we have linked the QSkin study database with the Queensland Cancer Registry. We have now also linked the database with records from Medicare Australia, and we are now in the process of analysing these complex records. Medicare captures information on the treatment of non-melanoma skin cancers (basal cell carcinoma and squamous cell carcinoma) for all QSkin participants who have consented to linking their data. We are also delighted to report two new study publications (see overleaf).

QSkin study expands horizons

Several lines of scientific research have suggested that what we eat may influence the development of skin cancer. In addition to limiting our sun exposure, eating certain foods may help reduce our risk. So that we can examine the role of nutrition in the development of skin cancer, we plan to ask each of you to complete a questionnaire through our study website early next year. This questionnaire will ask how often you usually eat different types of foods and should take no more than 40 minutes to complete online. More information will follow on this exciting new development.
New QSkin scientific papers


Olsen CM, Green, AC. More evidence of harms of sunbed use, particularly for young people. *BMJ* 2012;345:e6101.

QSkin in the news

**The Sunday Mail, Sunday 9 September**

**State of burnout**

Skin cancer hits four in 10

Samantha Healy

‘OUR in every 10 Queenslanders have had at least one skin cancer.

The world’s biggest study of skin cancer surveyed more than 4,000 Queenslanders aged 40–69 – and the results are sobering.

Professor David Whiteman, from the Queensland Institute of Medical Research, said more than 8,000 respondents had reported having at least one skin cancer surgically removed, burnt or frozen.

“As a researcher you know it is a very, very common cancer, but when you look at the results of the initial surveys from real people, well, you just know a lot more will have developed skin cancer by the time this project is complete,” Prof Whiteman said.

Nearly a quarter of those had also reported a family history of melanoma, he said.

“It is not just a funny mole gone bad, and it can be lethal. That is why it is so important to understand not just their history of sun exposure but also the genetic factors, the environmental factors and so on.”

Preliminary results from the QSkin Sun and Health Study were published in the *International Journal of Epidemiology* last week.

The research group chose the 40-69-year age group because the median age for a melanoma diagnosis in Australians is 59 years. The average age is even lower in central Queensland at 57 years old.

In total, 43,794 men and women aged 40-69 were selected randomly from the Australian Electoral Roll and will be followed for a decade or so.

Yesterday’s National Suicide Day started a month-long awareness campaign for the Melanoma Institute Australia.

50 Shades of Queensland

POSTER P44

**The Courier-Mail, Saturday 10 November**

**Death star: Sun brings men pain from above**

JANIELLE MILES

QUEENSLANDers are much more likely to be diagnosed with melanomas and the form this deadliest form of skin cancer than women, latest figures show.

Of the 200 Queenslanders diagnosed with melanomas of the skin in 2009, 57% of them were more than 60 per cent.

Cancer Council Queensland public health executive manager Louise Talbot said melanoma incidence was actually higher among women until the age of 45, when rates started to peak at men.

Men also accounted for more than two-thirds of the 250 Queensland deaths from melanoma in 2009, while more than 80 women died.

Queensland Institute of Medical Research (QIMR) epidemiologist David Whiteman said Australian men typically presented with more advanced melanomas, which carried a worse prognosis.

“We believe the higher mortality in males is largely due to poorer health behaviours such as they’re less likely to visit a doctor,” he said.

Professor Whiteman said gender differences in melanoma incidence could be explained by increased sun exposure among men, particularly on the back, shoulders, head and neck.

“Melanoma specialists Paul Messenger and Kerri Brown blamed the trend on men working with their shirts off and not wearing sunscreen.

“1 in 4 boys with melanoma worked in the railways and the construction industry in the ’50s and ’60s,” he said.

2 in 5 boys and 2 in 6 boys in Queensland have received unchanged at about 12 new diagnoses per 100,000 people.

Rates have decreased in people aged under 45, but have spiked in older Queenslanders.

Prof Whiteman said the drop in younger age groups was linked to the effectiveness of the 80s, 90s, Sun campaigns and campaigns in 10 years ago.

It does appear that there is a particular period early in your life when skin exposure is most harmful,” he said.

“The Slim, Slip, Slap campaigns started in the 90s and was targeted at young people.

“Those people are now in their 30s and 40s, so we’re starting to see those people are actually having lower rates of melanoma than their parents did at the same age.”

In the field of cancer, that’s how long prevent intervention takes.”

Follow-up

We are continuing to contact a group of QSkin Participants who did not provide their date of birth on their study consent form (last page of survey booklet), either by email, mail or phone. Many of you have responded already—Thank you!

Feedback?

If you have any comments or updated information (e.g. change of address), please contact us:

Tel: 1800 222 600 Email: qskin@qimr.edu.au Web: www.qskin.qimr.edu.au

We wish to send future newsletters by email or by text message. If you have received this newsletter by post, please email us with your contact details or call the study helpline.