

Media information



22-01-2009

SCIENTISTS REJECT CLAIMS THAT SUNBED USE INCREASES MELANOMA RISK

A claim by The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) relating to sunbed use and an increased risk of melanoma has been rejected by the Sunlight Research Forum (SRF) as spurious and misleading.

A report published by IARC, 'Artificial UV Radiation and Skin Cancer' claimed "using a sunbed under the age of 35 will increase your risk of developing melanoma by 75%".

Consultations by SRF with a number of international, high-profiled scientists specialising in the effect of UV exposure on human health have confirmed this claim is misleading. Amongst those consulted, Dr Frank de Gruijl from the Department of Dermatology at the Leiden University Medical Center in the Netherlands said, "It is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to separate the risks and melanoma incidences resulting from outdoor sunbathing and sunbed use. To separate the risks would demand at least a symmetrical way of looking at both factors. However, it is impossible to quantify sun exposure in daily life with the required certainty. To establish a causal link between UV exposure on sunbeds and melanoma occurrence, studies should show whether there are dose-effect relationships and whether exposures from earlier dates are more strongly associated with melanoma than recent exposures."

Ad Brand heads up the not-for-profit Sunlight Research Forum, which aims to facilitate and support research on the effects of UV exposure, said: "It is clear there is a stark division of opinion between IARC and other senior members of the scientific community identifying the relationship between sunbed exposure and melanoma risk. Public health campaigns and policies can be determined on the conclusions of this type of report and therefore, we believe it is very important the information is correctly presented and communicated by all the agencies involved. We do know that unlike sunbathing, sunbeds keep UV exposure within one minimal erythemal dose. Sunbed use might contribute to melanoma risk but sun exposure is expected by far to be the greatest risk factor."

Brand also criticised the IARC report for omitting the conclusion of an important multi-centric European study on sunbed use and stated: “An EU-funded case-control study at the Luxembourg Health Institute, into sunbed use and risk of melanoma in 18-49 year olds, compared past sunbed and sun exposure of 622 melanoma cases, to the exposure experienced by 649 controls in six European countries. Levels of sunbed use were higher than in any former study on the same topic. No evidence was found for an association between sunbed use and melanoma, no result suggested a dose-response curve, no association was present for subjects who reported more than 35 hours cumulated sunbed use or who started sunbed use at least 19 years before the interview. The study concluded ‘that if an association between sunbed use and melanoma truly existed, then it must be marginal’. At SRF, it is our belief inclusion of this study would have certainly affected the conclusion of the IARC report and so raises the question why it was left out?”

For more information on the Sunlight Research Forum visit www.sunlightresearchforum.eu

Ends

Notes:

- 1 The aim of The Sunlight Research Forum is to help bring to the fore, the latest medical and scientific information on the effects of moderate UV exposure on humans. It takes time, often decades, for new scientific ideas to be accepted and assimilated, first into the general body of scientific knowledge and finally into policy. We want to reduce this time to a minimum so that the benefits of research can lead to a better understanding of UV effects on human health and will become available to the public without any unnecessary delay. We hope to provide policy makers with correct information on which to base national health policy and individuals with better information on which to base choices about their lifestyles.

New research and well founded ideas on moderate UV exposure both indoor and outdoor will be presented and discussed in the Sunlight Research Forum by people working in the health disciplines, by academics and by journalists. The Sunlight Research Forum is a not-for-profit organisation based in The Netherlands.

www.sunlightresearchforum.eu

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