

POLICY & PRACTICE

Tanning Knowledge Disparity

White Hispanic teens perceive themselves to be at lower risk for skin cancer than white non-Hispanic teens, and thus take fewer precautions, according to a study of students at a public high school in Miami-Dade County. Hispanics are the fastest growing minority in the United States, and while they have a low incidence of melanoma, incidence has been increasing by 3% a year the last 15 years, according to the study, in the August 2007 Archives of Dermatology. A random sample of 369 students completed

a self-administered anonymous survey; 60% (221) were white Hispanic and 40% (148) were white non-Hispanic. Hispanics were significantly more likely than non-Hispanics to tan deeply, 44% compared with 31%. Both groups reported spending a similar amount of time in the sun. But Hispanics were 2.5 times more likely than whites to have used a tanning bed in the past year, and reported a greater number of tanning bed uses. Three-quarters of each group agreed that sun exposure was the most important skin cancer risk factor. But more

whites were familiar with skin self-exams and how to perform them. Whites were more likely to wear protective clothing and sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or higher. The authors concluded that skin cancer prevention programs should also target Hispanics.

OTC Anti-Aging Products Reviewed

Consumers are increasingly looking for a fountain-of-youth-in-a-bottle, but it still does not exist, despite the proliferation of such claims, according to a review of over-the-counter "anti-aging" products in the July/August issue of Aesthetic Surgery Journal. Dr. Timothy A. Miller,

chief of the division of plastic and reconstructive surgery at the University of California, Los Angeles, and resident Dr. Catherine K. Huang reviewed derivatives of vitamins A, B, C, and E, antioxidants like coenzyme Q-10, alpha hydroxy acids, botanicals, moisturizers, and pentapeptides. Only vitamin C, alpha hydroxy acids, and pentapeptides have evidence indicating some anti-aging properties, they concluded. And there have been some promising studies of vitamin A and B derivatives, they said, but the authors concluded that, "although many different compounds are marketed as anti-aging products, there are few studies proving their efficacy."

Nanoparticles in Sunscreens

The nonprofit environmental group Friends of the Earth wants nanoparticles removed from sunscreens, saying that the substances don't boost effectiveness, and that they may be harmful. The group noted that most consumers won't even know which brands have nanoparticles, since they aren't on the label. The group queried 128 manufacturers; 90 refused to answer; 9 said their product did not contain nanoparticles. The group's "Nanoparticles and Sunscreens: A Consumer Guide for Avoiding Nano Sunscreens," can be found at www.foe.org/nano. Friends of the Earth, along with Greenpeace, the International Center for Technology Assessment, and five other organizations have petitioned the Food and Drug Administration to begin regulating nanotechnology in sunscreens. In the meantime, the FDA should force manufacturers to recall any sunscreens that have nanoparticles, they said. "The government really has to get moving here and put labeling requirements in place," said Friends of the Earth's Ian Illuminato, who wrote the consumer guide.

NIH Lupus Research Plan

Government scientists recently outlined their plans for future research in lupus. The goals include laying the foundation for lupus prevention, identifying disease triggers, defining target organ damage mechanisms, understanding autoantibodies, expanding biopsychosocial research, discovering and validating biomarkers, and advancing therapy options. These goals are part of a long-range planning document recently released by the National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases, part of the National Institutes of Health. The NIH document predicts that lupus prevention could become an "attainable goal" in the next decade, and outlines a need to advance research efforts to identify disease risk through family studies and genetics. The document, which was mandated by Congress, was developed with input from scientific experts from the lupus community, according to NIH. "The ultimate goal of this plan is to identify needs and opportunities from both public and private organizations to continue to accelerate progress in lupus research to further improve quality of life of patients who have lupus," Dr. Stephen Katz, director of NIAMS, wrote in the introduction to the research plan.

—Alicia Ault

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