



Official EADV Press Conference

Date: 15 September 2017, 09:00 am-10:30 am

Tanned to death: Sunbed use is responsible for over 3,400 cases of melanoma in Europe per year!

UV is the most prominent risk factor associated with melanoma. About 65% of melanomas worldwide can be attributed to UVR exposure, a portion of which is due to sunbed use. It is estimated that sunbed use is responsible for more than 450,000 non-melanoma skin cancer cases and more than 10,000 melanomas in the United States, Europe and Australia [1]. In Europe, 3,400 melanoma cases annually are attributable to sunbed use [2], especially those occurring before the age of 30. The WHO reports: “Evidence of an association between artificial tanning and risk of skin cancer clearly shows that the risk is highest in those exposed to artificial tanning in early life. [...] In 2012, there were over 230,000 new cases of melanoma worldwide, causing an estimated 55,500 deaths [1]. One of the reasons for this strong correlation between sunbed use and melanoma might be the impact of cumulative risk factors among sunbed users: a French study [3] published in the EADV journal this March showed that most of them are females with fair hair and fair, freckled skin.

As Dr Emilie van Deventer, Geneva, Switzerland, team leader of the radiation programme at WHO, pointed out at the EADV Congress today, “it is time to take more action”. But what exactly can be done? Many Euros invested to inform the public about the risk of sunbeds – but so far with meagre success.

A study published in July [4] analysed why sunbed tanning remains popular in many Western countries, despite the publicised health risks associated with its usage. They found out that sunbed users were concerned with beauty and – surprisingly! – health. They emphasised possible health benefits (e.g. increasing vitamin D levels) while downplaying the real risk. These findings suggest that, rather than continuing to educate sunbed users about the risks, campaigns and interventions should challenge the commonly advanced arguments about health benefits. One study [5] investigating the attitudes of UK university students to ultraviolet radiation exposure showed that body image appeared to be a key motivator. The authors argue that public health strategies may benefit from prevention campaigns targeting appearance-related skin cancer. According to a Belgian analysis [6], further campaigning would definitely be

cost-effective: “For every euro invested in the campaign, €3.6 would be saved in the long-term for the healthcare payer”. In Belgium alone, the total economic burden of skin cancer in 2014 totalled € 106 million. “This is why the WHO stresses the need for national actions to limit the use of sunbeds, in a bid to reduce the associated health risks such as melanoma and non-melanoma skin cancers and the costs to health systems”, explained Dr van Deventer.

The WHO, in collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme, the World Meteorological Organization, the International Agency on Cancer Research and the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection, set up INTERSUN, the Global UV Project. Its goals are

- to provide information, practical advice and sound scientific predictions on the health impact and environmental effects of UV exposure,
- to provide guidance to national authorities about UV radiation protection.

For further information, visit the INTERSUN website at <http://www.who.int/uv> .

The EADV conducts the “Skin Cancer: Safe Work Under the Sun” campaign, which is aimed at raising awareness of skin cancer risks for outdoor workers.

[1] <http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/255695/1/9789241512596-eng.pdf>

[2] Boniol M, Autier P, Boyle P et al. Cutaneous melanoma attributable to sunbed use: systematic review and meta-analysis. *BMJ* 2012; 345: e4757.

[3] Grange F, Mortier L, Crine A et al. Prevalence of sunbed use, and characteristics and knowledge of sunbed users: results from the French population-based Edifice Melanoma survey. *J Eur Acad Dermatol Venereol* 2015; 29 Suppl 2: 23-30

[4] Taylor J, Murray M, Lamont A. Talking about sunbed tanning: Social representations and identity-work. *Soc Sci Med* 2017 Jul; 184: 161-168

[5] Kirk L, Greenfield S. Knowledge and attitudes of UK university students in relation to ultraviolet radiation (UVR) exposure and their sun-related behaviours: a qualitative study. *BMJ Open* 2017 Mar 13; 7(3): e014388

[6] Pils L, Hoorens I, Vossaert K Burden of skin cancer in Belgium and cost-effectiveness of primary prevention by reducing ultraviolet exposure. *Prev Med* 2016 Dec; 93: 177-182.

About EADV

Founded in 1987, EADV is a non-profit association whose vision is to be the premier European Dermato-Venereology Society, with the key aims of improving the quality of patient care, providing continuing medical education (CME) for all Dermato-Venereologists in Europe, and advocacy on behalf of the specialty and patients.

The membership concept has been widened to include all areas of Europe and elsewhere, and to develop alliances and affiliations with other organisations.

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