

Skin Cancer: Knowledge, Behaviors, and Attitudes of College Students.

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OBJECTIVES: Knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors of college students regarding melanoma and skin protection were examined.

METHODS: We surveyed 492 students at a mid-sized southern university. The Melanoma Risk Behavior Survey was administered in lecture classes.

RESULTS: Mean knowledge score was 10.6 +/- 3.8 (24 questions). A majority of participants knew that sun exposure increases the risk for skin cancer; however, only 29% correctly identified behaviors that reduce this risk. Mean attitude score was 5.26 +/- 2.73 (11 questions). Sixty-nine percent agreed that all people should take precautions against skin cancer; however, only 51% believed they themselves should practice sun safe behaviors. Mean behavior score was 1.29 +/- 1.22 (9 possible). Only 3.1% reported avoiding the sun during peak hours, and only 5.1% regularly use sunscreen when exposed to the sun.

CONCLUSION: Campus programs for increasing awareness of skin cancer risk are warranted. Changing attitudes and behaviors regarding exposure and protective measures is increasingly important.

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