

Researchers identify strategy for passing tanning bed legislation

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Researchers from Boston University School of Medicine (BUSM) have found that when attempting to pass tanning bed legislation, successful advocates collaborate with local and national organizations and lobbyists and have direct contact with the sponsoring legislator to aid in the passage of the bill. These findings, which appear on-line in the *Journal of the American Academy of Dermatology*, also identify strong lobbying efforts by the tanning bed industry as the biggest barrier to passing tanning bed legislation.

Recent research concludes that there is a strong correlation between ultraviolet exposure via tanning beds before age 35 and [malignant melanoma](#) and squamous cell cancer. This research also shows an association of younger age of exposure to tanning booths and greater risk of [skin cancer](#). Nearly all U.S. studies have found that an estimated one-third of teenaged girls report using tanning beds with 12 to 13 years being a common age of onset and 17 years being the most common age for use. Furthermore, a recent increased incidence of both thinner and thicker melanomas has been noted in young women aged 15-39. This is thought to be related to [tanning bed](#) use in women born after 1965.

In order to determine the resources required to pass tanning bed legislation and identify key barriers to its passage, the researchers surveyed legislators and advocates in 15 states where tanning bed bills were proposed in 2006.

The researchers identified a number of resources that assisted in passing

tanning bed legislation, such as discussion with the sponsoring legislator and use of a lobbyist. The advocates also reported identifying knowledgeable health care providers, researchers and public health advocates who were able to respond to industry concerns. Finding the most current data on the health effects of tanning beds and providing experts for testimony was also identified as important for passing legislation.

Strong lobbying efforts by the tanning bed industry was the biggest obstacle to passing legislation. In addition, the researchers found that difficulty obtaining support from other advocacy organizations, problems obtaining scientific data and identifying the right legislator were all barriers to passing legislation.

"By studying the characteristics that lead to passage of tanning bed legislation we may be able to aid future advocates and legislators in passage of effective bills," said senior author Marie-France Demierre, MD, FRCPC, director of the Skin Oncology Program at BUSM.. "This in turn may reduce youth exposure to ultraviolet light and ultimately reduce rates of [melanoma](#)," she added.

Provided by Boston University Medical Center

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