

Solariums double skin cancer risk in young people

August 3 2010

(PhysOrg.com) -- Scientists have confirmed what has long been feared - young people who use solariums have almost double the risk of being diagnosed with skin cancer before the age of 40.

The study, published in the latest edition of the [International Journal of Cancer](#), was performed by a team of Australian researchers led by Dr Anne Cust of the School of Population Health at the University of Melbourne. It is the first study to look at age differences in the risk of skin cancer associated with solariums.

“Our findings indicate that solarium use causes around three quarters of melanomas occurring in people 18-29 years of age who have used a solarium, and the risk of being diagnosed with skin cancer doubles if first exposure to solariums happens before the age of 20,” Dr Cust says.

“We estimate that a large proportion - over 16 per cent - of melanoma cases in young people could be prevented in Australia by avoiding solarium exposure.”

While these figures are alarming for Australians, Dr Cust stresses that the overall picture is likely to be even worse elsewhere in the world.

“Since Australia is reported to have the lowest frequency of solarium use of developed countries, the proportion of all cases of early-onset melanoma attributable to solarium use is almost certainly higher in other developed countries.”

Dr Cust says the team was driven to look at solarium use and melanoma risk in people under the age of 40 as age differences in risk had never been investigated, and because younger people are more likely to use solariums.

“There is mounting evidence that use of solariums is associated with an increased risk of melanoma but the susceptibility of young people to exposure of harmful UV radiation was unknown,” she says.

As well as revealing that earlier age at first use of solariums is associated with greater risk of melanoma, the study also revealed risk increased with cumulative use of solariums.

The researchers interviewed more than 600 people between the ages of 18 and 39 that had been diagnosed with [skin cancer](#), focusing on the regularity of their use of solariums.

“It is of public health importance to determine the risks of [melanoma](#) associated with solarium use in young people, as unfortunately the use of solariums is increasingly prevalent in developed countries,” says Dr Cust.

Provided by University of Melbourne

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