

## Fla. med student study reveals disparity of skin cancer knowledge

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There is a significant disparity between knowledge and attitudes on the dangers of skin cancer among male and female medical students in Florida according to a new study by a joint team of researchers from Ben-Gurion University of the Negev and the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine. The study was published in the American Medical Association's *Archives of Dermatology*.

While their overall knowledge was judged to be satisfactory there was a significant difference between male and female students' knowledge survey scores: 93.1 percent for women vs. 87.7 percent for men. Female students reported more frequent sunscreen use and sun-avoidance behavior and more frequently engaged in other sun-protective behaviors than their male peers.

Overall, men had a lower knowledge level, less appreciation for the importance of sun protection and were less likely to use active sun-protective measures. It is known that men are at higher risk for melanoma than woman (1:41 compared to 1:61). Gender differences in knowledge and behavior possibly contribute to the higher melanoma incidence and mortality among men over women.

"What is alarming and ironic is that students who had a family member or personal history with [skin cancer](#) actually scored lower on the survey's knowledge test at 74 percent vs. those who didn't, scoring an average of 90 percent on the survey," explains Dr. Yisrael Parmet, a researcher in BGU's Department of Industrial Engineering and Management.

"As future physicians, medical students will play an important role in the primary prevention of skin cancer. Their knowledge and awareness will likely impact the effectiveness of the promotion of sun-smart behavior."

Of the 270 first- and second-year [medical students](#) that completed the survey, more than two-thirds of students preferred the image of being tan to taking precautions outdoors.

**More information:** Skin Cancer Awareness, Attitude and Sun Protection Behavior among Medical Students at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine. *Archives of Dermatology* 2010 Jul; Vol. 146 (7), pp. 797-800.

Provided by American Associates, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev

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