

New approaches to skin cancer prevention

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The annual "Euromelanoma Day" campaign is designed to prevent skin cancer among the general public. While there has been considerable interest, it has proved difficult to reach out to some of the at-risk groups. As such, new ways of encouraging these people to go to a dermatologist are being introduced, reveals research from the University of Gothenburg presented at the dermatologist conference in Sweden.

John Paoli is a researcher at the Sahlgrenska Academy and specialist at Sahlgrenska University Hospital's dermatology clinic, and one of the speakers at the conference.

"In May every year we publish information in the press and media on the risks of excess sunbathing and the warning signs of [skin cancer](#). We also offer slots with dermatologists on Euromelanoma Day for the examination of suspicious moles etc without having to be referred by a doctor."

The driving force behind the campaign is the Euromelanoma group, which is part of the EADV, Europe's largest professional organisation for dermatology and venereology. In Sweden alone around 3,000 patients are examined on Euromelanoma Day, with almost 1% presenting with malignant melanomas, 6% with basal [cell carcinomas](#) (a more common but less dangerous form of skin cancer), and 10% with the early stages of a third form of skin cancer known as squamous cell [carcinoma](#).

"In a bid to reach patients who are more likely to develop skin cancer, we're trying to introduce new ways of booking the limited number of

slots available on the day itself, partly by introducing an age threshold of 18," says Paoli.

"This threshold has meant that we can see more older patients, with fewer "unnecessary" visits from young patients who are far less likely to have skin cancer. This means that the Swedish patients who are examined are, on average, ten years older than their European counterparts, which is why we find more tumours."

Another new approach that differentiates Sweden from the rest of Europe is that patients will have to pay the going rate for a visit to a dermatologist. Experience shows that this makes it far more likely that they will have examined their skin carefully prior to the visit and that there will be a mole or lesion that is causing concern, rather an appointment being made simply for peace of mind.

"We hope that these initiatives will lead to fewer deaths and lower costs to society, as a proper diagnosis from a dermatologist has proved far more effective than unnecessary testing at primary care level," stresses Paoli.

Provided by University of Gothenburg

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