

## Some hair professionals report looking for skin cancer lesions on customers' scalp, neck and face

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In a survey of hair professionals, some reported that they look at customers' face, scalp and neck for suspicious skin lesions, according to a report in the October issue of *Archives of Dermatology*.

"[Melanoma](#) of the scalp and neck represented 6 percent of all melanomas and accounted for 10 percent of all melanoma deaths in the United States from 1973 to 2003, with a five-year survival probability of 83.1 percent for stage I melanoma of the scalp and neck compared with 92.1 percent for stage I melanoma of other sites," the authors write as background information in the article.

Elizabeth E. Bailey, M.D., of Brigham and Women's Hospital and Harvard School of Public Health, Boston, and colleagues conducted a survey of 304 hair professionals from 17 salons in a single chain in the greater Houston area. Of 304 professionals surveyed in January 2010, 203 completed the questionnaire (66.8 percent response rate), which included questions on the frequency with which they observed their customers' scalp, neck and face for abnormal moles during the previous month.

Of the 203 respondents, 69 percent reported being "somewhat" or "very likely" to give customers a skin [cancer information](#) pamphlet during an appointment; 49 percent reported they were "very" or "extremely" interested in participating in a [skin cancer](#) education program; and 25

percent share general health information with customers "often" or "always." Most respondents (71.9 percent) also reported they had not received a course on skin cancer but a modest number were educating their customers and observing for suspicious lesions.

When answering questions about observing suspicious [skin lesions](#) during the previous month, 73 participants (37.1 percent) reported looking at more than 50 percent of their customers' scalps; 56 (28.8 percent) reported looking at more than 50 percent of their customers' necks; and 30 (15.3 percent) reported looking at more than 50 percent of their customers' faces. Additionally, 58 percent of participants reported they had recommended at least once that a customer see a health professional for an abnormal mole.

The authors also found that frequency of observation of their customers' lesions was associated with their own self-reported health communication practices and personal skin practices but was not associated with their own knowledge about skin cancer.

"In conclusion, this study provides evidence that hair professionals are currently acting as lay health advisors for skin cancer detection and prevention and are willing to become more involved in skin cancer education in the salon," the authors write. "Future research should focus on creating a program that provides hair professionals with expert training and effective health communication tools to become confident and skilled lay skin cancer educators."

**More information:** Arch Dermatol. 2011;147[10]:1159-1165.

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