

Antiestrogen therapy may decrease risk for melanoma

January 4 2012

(Medical Xpress) -- Women with breast cancer who take antiestrogen supplements may be decreasing their risk for melanoma, according to a study published in *Cancer Prevention Research*, a journal of the American Association for Cancer Research.

Christine Bouchardy, M.D., Ph.D., professor at the University of Geneva and head of the Geneva Cancer Registry, and colleagues analyzed data from 7,360 women who had [breast cancer](#) between 1980 and 2005. About half (54 percent) of these women received antiestrogen therapy.

The researchers followed the patients until 2008 and recorded 34 [melanoma](#) cases during the follow-up period. Risk for melanoma was 60 percent higher among patients who did not receive antiestrogen therapy compared with patients who received antiestrogen therapy.

According to Bouchardy, the increased focus on [estrogen](#)'s role in breast cancer has led scientists to start questioning what role estrogen is playing in other cancers. "These data reinforce the hypothesis that estrogens play a role in melanoma occurrence," she said.

Bouchardy said this may be due to the fact that estrogens are associated with increased levels of melanocytes and melanin production in human skin, which have been linked to early-stage melanoma. However, she cautioned against widespread antiestrogen supplementation to prevent melanoma in the general population.

“These results need to be replicated in other studies, particularly given the numerous side effects linked to this kind of drug,” said Bouchardy.

The study was funded by a grant from the Swiss Research Foundation against Cancer, a nonprofit group.

Provided by American Association for Cancer Research

Citation: Antiestrogen therapy may decrease risk for melanoma (2012, January 4) retrieved 5 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2012-01-antiestrogen-therapy-decrease-melanoma.html>

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