USPSTF: Insufficient evidence for visual skin cancer screening

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(HealthDay)—The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force has found that there is currently insufficient evidence to weigh the benefits and harms of visual skin cancer screening in adults. These findings form the basis of a draft recommendation statement published online Nov. 30 by the USPSTF.

Noting that an estimated 74,000 U.S. men and women will develop melanoma in 2015 and 9,940 will die from the disease, researchers from the USPSTF reviewed the evidence for the benefits and harms of visual skin cancer screening in adults.

The researchers found that visual skin examination by clinicians has modest sensitivity and specificity for detecting melanoma. However, the evidence is currently insufficient to assess the balance of benefits of

visual screening. Adequate evidence suggests that visual skin cancer screening may lead to harms; the magnitude of these harms could not be quantified based on current data. Based on these findings, the USPSTF concluded that the current evidence is inadequate to determine the balance of benefit and harms of visual skin examination for asymptomatic adults.

"The Task Force is dedicated to helping Americans avoid skin cancer and lead healthy lives," Task Force member Michael P. Pignone, M.D., M.P.H., said in a statement. "Until we have more research to better understand the balance of benefits and harms of a clinical visual skin exam, we encourage patients to talk to their doctor about any concerns they have about their skin."

More information: Draft Evidence Review
Draft Recommendation Statement
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