

Study shows that tattoo artists are first-line responders to skin health concerns as well as tattoo complications

June 10 2016

Tattoo artists frequently encounter adverse tattoo events according to a New York University Department of Dermatology study, published this month in the Karger journal Dermatology.

"We know that people often turn to tattoo artists before [medical professionals](#) with adverse tattoo reactions," says principal investigator Marie Leger, who in July will become an Assistant Professor of Dermatology at Weill Cornell Medical College. "So we decided that it was important to assess what tattooists are seeing and how they are responding."

The researchers surveyed 90 licensed tattoo artists in New York City. 92.8 % of those surveyed reported observing at least one adverse tattoo reaction during their careers, most often color-specific reactions, allergies, or abnormal healing.

About half of the tattoo artists reported receiving formal training about skin conditions related to tattoos. Those who received prior training were more likely to provide written aftercare instructions, ask clients about preexisting skin conditions, and look for atypical moles. They were also more likely to report being confident about managing adverse tattoo reactions and advising clients on the risks of getting a tattoo with a history of a preexisting skin condition.

"We think this study shows that there is a lot of collaborative potential between tattoo artists and physicians. Tattooists are often the 'first-line responders,' when something goes wrong with a tattoo, and there is clearly an interest in more education," Leger reports.

The researchers also emphasize that tattooists see many people who may not have access to a dermatologist. Training tattoo artists to recognize atypical moles and suspicious lesions may be an additional tool to promote [skin](#) cancer screening in their opinion.

More information: Brooke E. Rosenbaum et al. Skin Care in the Tattoo Parlor: A Survey of Tattoo Artists in New York City, *Dermatology* (2016). [DOI: 10.1159/000446345](https://doi.org/10.1159/000446345)

Provided by Karger Publishers

Citation: Study shows that tattoo artists are first-line responders to skin health concerns as well as tattoo complications (2016, June 10) retrieved 3 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2016-06-tattoo-artists-first-line-skin-health.html>

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