Medical Xpress

Skin cancer now top cancer among young women in UK

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(AP) -- Melanoma, the deadliest kind of skin cancer, is now the most common cancer in young British women, the country's leading cancer organization said Wednesday. Skin cancer has overtaken cervical cancer as the top cancer striking women in their 20s, according to the latest data from Cancer Research United Kingdom.

The trend is particularly worrying since younger people are not generally those most susceptible to melanoma. Rates of skin cancer are typically highest in people over age 75.

But experts worry that increasing numbers of younger people being diagnosed with skin cancer could be the start of a dangerous trend. Women in their 20s make up a small percentage of all patients diagnosed with melanoma in Britain, but nearly a third of all cases occur in people younger than 50.

Based on current numbers, Cancer Research UK predicts that melanoma will become the fourth most common cancer for men and women of all ages by 2024, and that cases will jump from about 9,000 cases a year to more than 15,500.

Cancer experts attribute the rising number of skin cancer cases largely to the surge in people using tanning salons. "Spending time on sunbeds is just as dangerous as staying out too long in the sun," said Caroline Cerny of Cancer Research UK. The organization is starting a SunSmart campaign to warn Britons of the dangers of being too bronzed.

"The intensity of UV rays in some sunbeds can be more than 10 times stronger than the midday sun," Cerny said.

In the United States, several states require parental approval before minors can use tanning salons. Wisconsin bans people 16 and under from using tanning beds, and others ban children under 14. At least 29 states have regulations governing minors' use of tanning salons.

In the U.K., Scottish politicians passed legislation banning those under 18 from using tanning beds, though it hasn't yet been implemented. There are no plans for legislation in the rest of the U.K.

The World Health Organization has previously recommended that tanning beds be regulated because of their potential to damage DNA in the skin.

Experts said most deadly skin cancers could be avoided if people took the proper precautions when in the sun and avoided tanning beds.

One the Net:

http://www.cancerresearchuk.org

http://www.sunsmart.org.uk

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