Skin Cancer Awareness, Prevention, and Education in Adults Over Age 40

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INTRODUCTION

According to the EPA and CDC, the most prevalent diagnosed cancer in the United States is skin cancer. One in five Americans will be diagnosed with skin cancer in their lifetime. The American Cancer Society estimated that 76,690 people would be diagnosed with melanoma in 2013, of which Florida represents 5,330 of these new cases, the second highest population behind California. Nonmelanoma skin cancers (NMSCs) include basal cell carcinoma and squamous cell carcinoma. These are the most commonly diagnosed forms of cancer in the United States, making up 1.3 million cases annually. They are usually diagnosed after the age of 55, and although the death rates due to NMSCs are low, they represent about 5% of all Medicare cancer expenditures. Direct sun exposure, blistering sunburns in childhood, and family history are risk factors for these type of skin cancer. Malignant melanoma is the deadliest form of skin cancer and can develop from pre-existing moles or on normal skin. The risk factors for melanoma include a light complexion, a large number of moles, blistering sunburns during childhood, sun exposure, and family history. If caught early, melanoma can be curable, thus it is important to teach patients to examine their skin and be aware of changing moles. However, if not caught early, melanoma has a higher risk of metastasis and high death rates. The majority of the participants who did report using sunscreen stated that they applied it to their face, neck, and arms when outside in direct sunlight for long periods of time. 55% (n=5) reported that they had been sunburned in their lifetime; however, 68% (n=21) of this group had not had a sunburn in the last 12 months. Of those, 47% (n=7) stated that they were an increased risk of developing skin cancer. Only 32% (n=5) stated that they performed skin self-exams at home regularly. Of those, 47% (n=5) stated that they had been taught what to look for, which is the ABCDEs of suspicious moles. The majority of the participants who did report using sunscreen stated that they had been taught what to look for, which is the ABCDEs of suspicious moles. However, 55% (n=15) reported that they had had a sunburn in the last 12 months. 79% (n=33) knew what type of skin cancer their family member had. Only 20% (n=8) stated that they had a family member with skin cancer, and of those, only two participants knew what type of skin cancer their family member had.

METHODS

Participants were recruited from the waiting room of the internal medicine and geriatric section of the Ziff Clinic at Nova Southeastern University. Inclusion criteria to participate in the study were 40 years of age or older. The survey consisted of 18 questions—15 yes or no questions, two multiple-choice questions, and one open-ended question. Ten of the yes or no questions included a follow-up question, with five yes or no questions, one multiple-choice question, and four fill-in-the-blank questions. The questions determined education about skin cancer, skin cancer screening habits, skin cancer treatment options, sun-safe practices, and beliefs about skin cancer and sun exposure. Data was then analyzed using Excel software to determine averages and percentages for each question on the survey.

RESULTS

Skin Cancer; Treatable and Beatable with Early Detection

• Are you aware of the different types of skin cancers?

2% 14% 24% 46% 3%

• Have you ever had a skin cancer screening?

33% 22% 51% 9% 3%

• Do you use sun protection?

77% 17% 6% 1%

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• Do you believe there is a lack of knowledge and information available to aid the population in making sun-safe decisions?

24% 28% 35% 11% 2%

• 26% (n=1) stated that they would have avoided the sun in their youth if they had known then what they know now about skin cancer and sun damage.

• 74% of participants (n=35) stated that they would have avoided the sun in their youth if they had known then what they know now about skin cancer and sun damage.

• Five participants in this group could identify the most dangerous form of skin cancer: 87% (n=35) reported that they were unaware of the different treatment options for skin cancers. 76% (n=31) reported that they avoided the sun between 10:00am and 4:00pm.

• Do you feel it is important to protect yourself from sun exposure on a regular basis?

75% 20% 5% 0%

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