

Prevention and Early Detection of Skin Cancer

Summary: The Dermatology Nurses' Association recognizes the urgent need to educate health care workers and the public about the prevention and early detection of skin cancer. This position statement has been developed to serve as a guide in meeting this need.

The Dermatology Nurses Association (DNA), a professional specialty nursing organization, recognizes the urgent need to educate health care workers and the public about the prevention and early detection of skin cancer. DNA developed the position statement to serve as a guide in meeting this need.

Skin cancer accounts for almost half of all cancers that will occur in 1999. Over one million basal cell and squamous cell carcinomas will occur in the United States this year. Malignant melanoma will occur in 1 out of 75 persons. Deaths from melanoma and other skin cancers (excluding basal cell and squamous cell carcinomas) are estimated to be 9,200 in 1999.

Since most skin cancers, including malignant melanoma, are curable when detected early and adequately treated, the Dermatology Nurses' Association believes that:

- Skin assessment is part of the overall health assessment of nurses; assessment of skin should occur formally, or informally, on our dermatologic patients with assessment for skin cancer as part of the overall assessment for dermatologic conditions.
- Education of skin cancer prevention and early detection should be incorporated into patient interactions and activities for the public at large.
- Nurses, as educators of other health care workers and the public, are in a position to teach others about:
 - the dangers of cumulative UV exposure, including UVA (tanning booths) and UVB (ultraviolet rays which, over time, can cause skin cancer).
 - the signs of skin cancer and information regarding the "at risk" population.
 - the dangers of cumulative sun exposure and preventive measures such as photoprotection and self skin examinations.
- Screening for skin cancer is within the realm of the dermatology nurse when the screenings are under the direction of a physician and a system is in place for follow-through of suspicious lesions.

The Dermatology Nurses' Association recognizes and partners with the American Academy of Dermatology, the American Cancer Society, the Skin Cancer Foundation, and the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, and strives to continue working with them toward the need for prevention and early detection of skin cancers.

References

The American Cancer Society. (1999). Cancer Facts and Figures-1999. Atlanta: ACC.
Consensus Development Panel. (1992). Diagnosis and treatment of early melanoma. NIH Consensus Development Conference, Consensus Statement, 10, 1-26.
Dermatology Nurses' Association. (1992). Position statement, prevention and early detection of skin cancer. Pitman, NJ: DNA.
The Skin Cancer Foundation. (1992). Sun alert American, a blueprint for community action. New York: SCF.

Available Resources

American Academy of Dermatology
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (National Center for Health Statistics)
Dermatology Nurses' Association
National Cancer Institute's Surveillance, Epidemiology and End Result (SEER) Program
The Skin Cancer Foundation